PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 173

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

THIRD SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
THIRTY-NINTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1989-90

COMPRISING PERIOD
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THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE THIRD SESSION OF THE FIFTIETH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 25 JUNE 1987]

THIRTY-NINTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 173**

TWELFTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1989-90

House of Commons

Monday 21 May 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SECURITY

War Widows' Pensions

1. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of claims for war widows' pensions are successful *(a)* on initial application and *(b)* on appeal.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mrs. Gillian Shephard): About 46 per cent. of claims for war widows pensions are successful on initial application. Some 19 per cent. of cases which go to appeal are successful.

Mr. Pike: Does the Minister recognise that incomplete records and the passage of time make it increasingly difficult to prove or disprove that war service has contributed to the death of a pensioner? Many widows as well as their husbands suffer for many years and find it extremely difficult. Is not it time that we took a more generous approach to widows whose husbands suffered as a result of giving service to the country during the war?

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I know that the hon. Gentleman has a particular case in mind and I have every sympathy with the lady—he will know that her case is to go to appeal. He seems to be asking about automatic entitlement to a war widow's pension. The basic condition for the award of a war widow's pension must be that the husband's death was due to or substantially hastened by service in the armed forces. There must be that causal connection or the rates of the war widow's pension could not be justified.

Disabled People

2. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a further statement on the implementation of proposals in "The Way Ahead" to benefit disabled people who want to achieve independence through working.

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. Nicholas Scott): Detailed work is progressing on our proposal in "The Way Ahead" to introduce a new benefit, disability employment credit, which will make it easier for disabled people to work. We intend to introduce legislation in time to bring the new benefit into effect from April 1992.

Mr. Bowis: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the new benefit will give enormous new opportunities to disabled people to join the community in the fullest sense? Does he also agree that three elements are necessary to make that possible? The first is training—will he talk to his hon. Friends about that? Secondly, employers should display a degree of patience to enable people to settle into the work. Thirdly, a safety net should always be provided so that those who try to go out to work but find that it is not possible will always be able to return to receiving the full benefits to which they were previously entitled.

Mr. Scott: I agree very much with the points that my hon. Friend has made. We shall be aiding the provision of a safety net by enabling those on invalidity benefit before they go into work, which attracts the disability employment credit, to retain their underlying entitlement to that benefit. Therefore, they will not have to requalify for it if by chance they are unable to sustain the job. I believe that the disability employment credit will be an important encouragement to people to go into work. It

will reinforce the emerging demographic pattern, which I believe will compel employers to look beyond the disabilities that they see to the abilities that frequently lie behind them.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Is the Minister aware that there is great concern among people with disabilities and their carers about the Government's attitude to the independent living fund? Will he therefore seek to persuade the Treasury that it is extremely important that people with disabilities should not experience poverty and that poverty and disability should not be synonymous?

Mr. Scott: As the hon. Gentleman will recall, I was able to announce an extra £8 million for the independent living fund and I am in discussion with the trustees of the fund about its future.

Mr. Alfred Morris: Does the Minister still expect to save £10 million by introducing the new credit as I was told in a parliamentary reply? Is he aware of the concern of Nicole Davoud and her working group on the credit that it should not exclude people who can work only for less than 24 hours per week, that it should not be means tested like family credit, and that the maximum allowable income should not restrict disabled people to lower-paid work? What assurances can the Minister give to the working group on those important issues?

Mr. Scott: I recognise the right hon. Gentleman's right —indeed, duty—to press me on those matters, but we have exchanged views on it before and he knows as well as I do that we are still working on the details of the benefit. We estimate that it will cost about £80 million to help 50,000 disabled people to obtain employment. The right hon. Gentleman should recognise that that is an important step in the right direction.

Lone Parents

3. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much a lone parent with two children would have to earn to be better off in work than on benefits, making an appropriate assumption about the costs of child care.

8. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much a lone parent with two children would have to earn to be better off in work than on benefits, making an appropriate assumption about the costs of child care.

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): It is not possible to generalise in the way that the questions seek as individual circumstances vary so widely and lone parents' income in work will also depend on whether maintenance is paid. The benefit system does, however, recognise that lone parents who work may face additional costs of various kinds, and the earnings disregard for such lone parents on housing benefit is to be increased from £15 to £25 a week in October.

Ms. Short: First, will the Secretary of State apologise, on behalf of the chair of the Conservative party, to lone parents throughout the country who are deeply hurt by the suggestion that their children are likely to become criminals and are taking part in a wrecking of society? Secondly, do the Government understand that many lone parents would love to work but cannot do so because of the costs of child care? Will he reconsider the Government's decision to prevent lone parents offsetting the costs of child care against benefit because the Government are thus trapping large numbers of them into poverty and into living on benefits when they would like to be independent and give a better life to their children?

Mr Newton: With regard to the first part of the hon. Lady's question, I do not accept—nor do I think that my right hon. Friend would accept—the interpretation that the hon. Lady has placed on his remarks. We all share a common concern to improve the position of lone parents. My right hon. Friend was doing no more than talk about some of the difficulties that they and their families may face, which we are all concerned to tackle.

With regard to the second part of the hon. Lady's question, I have already referred to one significant improvement that we are making in the in-work earnings disregard. She will be aware that a significant number of lone parent families are helped by family credit, which is very much directed at them—about a third of those on family credit are lone parents. We shall continue to try to improve the benefits system, not least to try to improve the collection of maintenance, which provides portable income for those who receive benefit and then gain work. That will make a significant contribution to the problem.

Mrs. Mahon: The Minister will be aware that many lone parents will be disappointed with that answer. Will he reconsider taking the cost of child care into account? I add my support to the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) about the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker). Will the Minister also send a message to the Prime Minister, and point out to her that the majority of lone parents have not had the access to wealth that she had when bringing up children?

Mr Newton: Undoubtedly, many lone parents are in difficult circumstances. That is why we have made a number of improvements in the benefit system which are designed to help them. Some have already come into effect. Another, to which I have referred, will come into effect in October. Perhaps the biggest single weakness in our system at present is the lack of effective collection of maintenance to which we are directing close attention.

Mr. Favell: Labour Members talk as though the money to provide child care for lone parents will drop out of the sky. It has to be paid for by other taxpayers—[HON. MEMBERS: "What about directors' pay rises?"] Is it reasonable that a tax-paying couple should provide Rolls-Royce child care treatment for lone parents when it is perfectly open to those parents to do what other working women have to do—look to their mothers, aunts or neighbours to help out, rather than expect the help to come from taxes?

Mr. Newton: It is certainly the case that any improvement, as some would see it, or change in the benefit system in this sector, as in others, would cost money, and a decision would have to be taken about where that should come from and whether it might be better spent elsewhere. The last survey done on this subject—admittedly, it is rather old as it was done nearly 10 years ago by the social policy research unit—showed that about four out of five lone parents did not have any child care costs, even when they were in part-time work.

Mr. Rooker: Is the Secretary of State aware that last week the accounting officer of his Department, when asked why there had been a massive disincentive for lone parents to work during the past eight years, as identified by the Comptroller and Auditor General, twice told the Public Accounts Committee that it was due to ministerial policy decisions?

Mr. Newton: I am aware, having talked with my Permanent Secretary about the matter this morning, that he had some interesting exchanges with the hon. Gentleman last week. But I have not yet been able to read the transcript——

Mr. Kirkwood: Slacking!

Mr. Newton: Because it is not available.

Mr. Rooker: Yes, it is.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) will forgive me if I do not get drawn further down that path, especially as I believe that he has been promised a further note on some of the matters involved.

I must also tell the hon. Gentleman for the third time, but without apology, that the aspect of the system that has most obviously changed for the worse in the past 10 years has been the growing deficiency in collecting maintenance, which we are now vigorously trying to correct—I am glad to see the hon. Gentleman nodding in agreement.

Low-paid Workers

4. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many low-paid workers are entitled to claim means-tested benefits and also liable to pay income tax; and what was the number in 1985.

Mr. Newton: Although the information is not available on the basis requested, there are at present about 470,000 benefit units where the head is in full-time employment, pays income tax and receives an income-related benefit. Comparable information is not available for 1985.

Mr. Corbyn: I find that answer extremely surprising, because on 16 March 1990 such an answer was indeed given to my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), and an analysis done by the Low Pay Unit showed that in the past four years the number of people who fall into the means test trap has risen from 290,000 to more than 400,000. That is because —I hope that the Minister will tell us what plans he has to change this rule—indexing is linked to prices, not earnings, so many more families than before are worse off as a result of the policies adopted by the Department. If the Minister is serious about conquering poverty in this country—I have my doubts whether he is—will he kindly change the indexing formula so that more families will not get caught in the poverty trap as they do now?

Mr. Newton: I think that the hon. Gentleman may agree that the position is rather more complicated than he has acknowledged. He has referred to figures relating to the number of people with marginal deduction rates of 70 per cent. or more. An important part of the reforms that we undertook was dramatically to reduce the numbers subject to marginal deduction rates far higher than that. For example, whereas before the reforms more than 200,000 people were suffering deduction rates of more than 90 per cent., that number has fallen sharply but there has been some corresponding increase lower down.

Mr. Brazier: Does my right hon. Friend agree that since the Conservatives took office we have taken people out of the income tax net because real income tax allowances have increased by 25 per cent. more than inflation, and that the reason why the overlap has increased is that we have also increased benefits available to the low paid? Indeed, the family income supplement, the forerunner of the present family credit, which was designed to assist the low paid was introduced by a Conservative Government.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend is right to say that the number of people paying income tax would be far higher but for the changes that the Government have made. He is also right to refer to the changes that we have made which mean that income-related benefits are now calculated on income net of tax and national insurance contributions, which has helped to reduce those high marginal deduction rates and been a significant improvement in the system.

Housing Benefit

5. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to review the operation of the housing benefit system.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Although we monitor closely the working of the housing benefit scheme, we have no plans for a major review.

Mrs. Gorman: I thank my hon. Friend for her reply. Does she agree that if we subsidise something we often get more of it, and that people in local government who administer housing benefit and, incidentally, the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 believe that such subsidies are often a temptation to people to throw themselves on the authority for accommodation? If she agrees with that, would she further agree that the way to do something about the housing problem is to recreate a market in rented homes, and that if we could abolish controls on newly rented property we would reinstate the friendly landlady, who would be willing to take in many of the young people and others who sleep rough on our streets?

Mrs. Shephard: I am aware of my hon. Friend's concern in this matter. She has raised it before in the House and she will know that regulation of rents is a matter for the Department of the Environment. She will also know that housing benefit is not intended to help pay excessively high rents. Our arrangements for reimbursing local authorities for housing benefit expenditure give them an incentive not to pay benefit above reasonable market levels. Local authorities have powers to restrict benefit in cases where accommodation is over-large for a claimant's needs or unreasonably expensive. In the longer term, we propose to restrict the amount of housing benefit payable for properties at the top end of the market, but information to achieve that is not ready and will not be ready for some time.

Mr. Kirkwood: If the Government will not undertake a major review of the housing benefit system, will they take an urgent look at the way in which the housing benefit system prejudices the young, especially the

homeless young? Will the Minister study the speech by Mr. Donald Maclean, president of the Association of Scottish Police Superintendents, who said in Peebles on Friday that stray dogs get a better deal than the young homeless in Scotland and that a civilised society such as ours should be able to do better than that? This is the first time in my experience that a senior and respected police officer has become involved in the benefit debate, and the Government should not ignore that. In the monitoring or review process, will the Minister bring forward urgent help for people under 25?

Mrs. Shephard: I am not aware of the speech made by Mr. Donald Maclean but I will certainly look at it. The hon. Gentleman spoke of the young homeless. I am sure that he is aware of the administrative and other changes introduced by the Department to help 16 and 17-year-olds become entitled to benefit. An announcement about that was made in November and changes were made in the interaction between benefit and youth training schemes. Those were announced by the Department of Employment in March. In July we made a substantial change in benefit arrangements for young people who have to live away from home. Of course, we continue to monitor the situation.

Mr. Hind: My hon. Friend constantly reviews the housing benefit system. Will she look at the position of pensioners in receipt of small occupational pensions for which they have paid during their working life? When money becomes available will my hon. Friend try to improve their standard of living through the rates of benefit paid to them as that group of people has been hard hit by current inflation and the introduction of the community charge.

Mrs. Shephard: As my hon. Friend says, the Department continues to review the position of all groups. One result of such review was the changes made in October to help particularly needy pensioners of the kind described by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Winnick: Is the Minister aware of the appalling hardship and deprivation caused to many people and certainly to my constituents because, as the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) has said, the occupational pension is fully taken into account and the amount of housing benefit is therefore either derisory or none at all? Why do the Government penalise time and again so many of our senior citizens who, because they receive such a pension—in many cases a small amount—have to pay large amounts in rent and rates so that their standard of living is constantly being undermined? The Government bear a heavy burden of responsibility for the shocking poverty which has resulted from the changes in housing benefit.

Mrs. Shephard: I repeat that it was precisely such groups that the Government sought to target with our October package of help for older and poorer pensioners and, of course, are keeping the position under review.

Mr. Burns: Will my hon. Friend accept that there is a genuine problem about the payment of housing benefit? It usually takes two weeks and sometimes more to process an application, but many people who become homeless have to pay their rent weekly and landlords will not wait until the housing benefit application has been processed. It seems to be a vicious circle. I am sure that all hon. Members would be extremely grateful if my hon. Friend's Department could come up with any reasonable way to look at the rules and allow flexibility to minimise the number of people caught in that unfortunate trap.

Mrs. Shephard: The administration of housing benefit is a matter for local authorities. I believe that my hon. Friend has raised previously his concern about the way in which this is done in his constituency. Housing benefit claims are meant to be processed in 14 days. Many authorities achieve this target, and there is no reason why all of them should not do so. However, if claimants have to wait because of the inefficient operation of housing authorities there is the possibility of a crisis loan.

Benefit Uprating

6. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in which years during the 1980s the uprating of supplementary benefit or income support rates provided for an increase in their real value; and by what percentage.

Mr. Scott: These benefit levels have been uprated every year to take account of forecast or actual movements in the appropriate index. In a number of years there has also been specific extra help for special groups such as pensioners, disabled people and families with children.

Mr. Battle: We are beginning to view with deep suspicion the statistics that the Government give us. Will the Minister recommend that all Conservative Members read the Select Committee on Social Services' report on low-income statistics before repeating the false claim that the poor are better off under this Government? Is not it a fact that the real value of income support fell by 3·7 per cent. between 1981 and 1989? How would the Minister respond to my constituents who spell out the fact that their income is £84·99 a week on benefit and their outgoings on basic essentials are £91·84, so there is a shortfall of £6·85 every week? How would Conservative Members manage on such an income for at least a year?

Mr. Scott: We are studying the Select Committee report. We note that the Select Committee has said that it wants further work to be done on the pattern of statistics and the way in which they are provided and to increase both in scope and depth the figures provided by the Government on these matters. We shall take account of those recommendations as we consider the report.

I repeat that the benefits are uprated year by year by the appropriate index. In addition, we have found the money to provide extra help for low income families, for older and disabled pensioners and for families with children.

Pensioners' Charter

7. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he last met a group of pensioners' representatives to discuss the pensioners' charter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: We regularly meet representatives from pensioner organisations to discuss a range of issues of concern to them. Most recently, I accompanied the Prime Minister at a meeting with a delegation from the National Pensioners Convention.

Mr. Skinner: The Minister will know that one of the demands made by pensioners is for the Government to restore the link between pensions and the prices and earnings index. The breaking of that link resulted in the Government stealing £12 per week from every pensioner. He will also be aware that pensioners want to abolish standing charges and prescription charges and to have free travel like Ministers who are carted all over the country. They also want to get rid of the poll tax. Why does not the Minister go down to her bunker in Downing street and tell her to get rid of it and get off the pensioners' backs?

Mr. Scott: The hon. Gentleman, who, as ever, is strong on rhetoric but short on facts, may remember that the last Labour Government failed to honour its obligation to uprate pensions annually in line with the RPI. Their record in allowing inflation to run rampant through the incomes of pensioners also let the pensioners down considerably. It comes ill from the mouths of Labour Members to criticise us on this.

Mr. Ashby: When my hon. Friend meets the pensioners' representatives will he point out the real things that the Government have done to ensure that future generations of pensioners have a decent pension——

Ms. Short: Such as?

Mr. Ashby: —such as personal pension plans and so on, so that by the year 2000, most pensioners will have an occupational pension as well as a state pension and will have a decent standard of living?

Mr. Scott: I agree very much with my hon. Friend. The encouragement of the growth of occupational pensions, the introduction of personal pensions, and the encouragement for people to save during their working lives is bound to transform the lives and prospects of people in retirement.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Does the Minister accept that a major point of concern to all pensioners is the right to fuel and heating? Will he give serious consideration to the abolition of standing charges for gas and electricity supplies to pensioners and to the introduction of a cold climate allowance that is automatic and continuous?

Mr. Scott: I appreciate the hon. Lady's point, but I am not sure that the abolition of standing charges would necessarily help those most in need of assistance with heating. We incorporated the old heating allowances when we moved to the new system of income support. The case for the abolition of standing charges is not, in my view, convincing.

Mr. Barry Field: Has my right hon. Friend read the comment by the person to whom we may not refer in this House that the challenge facing the country is to find a more active role for pensioners? Does my right hon. Friend agree that many a nimble tune is played on an old fiddle? Will he consider my ten-minute Bill, which attempts to abolish age discrimination? Many pensioners are fed up with the emphasis placed on the quantity of life rather than the quality, as they have a real contribution to make to society.

Mr. Scott: I agree with my hon. Friend's sentiments, if not with the precise terms of his ten-minute Bill. Demography will encourage employers to take more notice of the abilities that senior citizens can bring to our economy. By abolishing the earnings rule, we have taken a substantial step in encouraging pensioners to contribute.

Mr. Meacher: In the light of the Minister's first reply, does he accept that the basic pension rose by 20 per cent. in real terms after six years of Labour Government, but by only 2 per cent. after 11 years of Tory Government? Does he acknowledge that the decision by the European Court of Justice last Thursday concerning pension ages has implications for not only occupational pension schemes but the state retirement pension? Does he agree that aligning the pensionable ages of men and women need not be unduly costly if it is undertaken gradually and if the individual is given the choice between a lower retirement age or a higher pension? As the European Court judgment was made in respect of article 119 of the treaty, which is directly applicable in courts in the United Kingdom, will the Secretary of State act before he is forced to do so? If so, when and how?

Mr. Scott: As to the hon. Gentleman's first point, it is not the level of the basic pension but pensioners' total income that matters. Under the present Government, that has risen twice as fast as that of the population as a whole, by 31 per cent., or 3·5 per cent. per annum, compared with 0·6 per cent. per annum under the previous Labour Administration. We are studying the implications of the European Court's judgment and will announce our conclusions to the House in due course.

Maintenance Payments

9. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what action he is taking to ensure that more maintenance is recovered from absent parents.

Mr. Newton: We are currently reviewing the maintenance system and aim to bring forward proposals later this year. In the meantime, we have taken action to increase maintenance recovered under the current system.

Mr. Nicholson: Is my right hon. Friend aware that those initiatives, though somewhat delayed, are very welcome? Non-payment of maintenance is an abuse which comes to the attention of many right hon. and hon. Members—certainly it comes to my attention. Referring to earlier exchanges, may I ask my right hon. Friend whether he is aware that there is unwillingness on the part of the average taxpayer constantly to plough money into public spending? If the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) and some of his unreconstructed followers do not recognise that, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) certainly appears to do so. What sums of money does my right hon. Friend expect to recover from absent parents this year?

Mr. Newton: I shall regard the latter part of my hon. Friend's remarks as a question properly and accurately directed at members of the Opposition Front Bench. The amount of maintenance that we expect to recover should increase from rather less than £200 million last year to £260 million in the current year, which is a significant increase. For that reason, I am a little resistant to his suggestion that we have been slow on these initiatives. Much has been done within the present system, and we are considering whether it can be made much better.

Mr. Frank Field: Will the Secretary of State accept the congratulations of Labour Members on, after 11 years of inaction, doing at least something on this front? But will he accept our criticism of a scheme that allows mothers on welfare to make over their maintenance payments to the state being extended to when they return to work? If it is, will not he create yet another disincentive to work?

Mr. Newton: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point, which we can consider in the wider review. I hope that he will agree—he was not inclined to do so the last time we discussed this—that for the state to involve itself in wholly private transactions would be a major step that should not be embarked on without consideration.

Mrs. Roe: Does my right hon. Friend accept that walking out on one's family is not an option which fathers should be able to consider? Will he undertake to consider the effect of the system that was introduced in Australia in 1988 for national collection and enforcement and its introduction in this country?

Mr. Newton: Yes, we have looked to see what we can learn from the Australian system. I was in the United States at Easter examining a system that operates in two states which has something in common with that in Australia. We can learn from both, even though we might not be able to copy either exactly.

Mr. Meacher: Is not this whole exercise purely aimed at cutting public expenditure rather than assisting lone parents, precisely because any maintenance recovered is used to dock benefit by a corresponding amount? If the Government wanted to assist mothers and their families, would not they use the £80 million that the Secretary of State expects to gain from the recovery of maintenance to return to mothers and their families at least some of the £1,100 million that they have stolen from them by freezing child benefit over the past three years?

Mr. Newton: Far more than £80 million has been allocated in the past two years to help low-income families with children, not least lone-parent families. As to the first, rhetorical, half of the hon. Gentleman's question, the answer is no. The plain fact is that lone parents who are receiving maintenance and their children are in a better position than those who are not receiving it, which is why we want to introduce a system for maintenance.

Benefit Processing

10. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proposals he has to improve the working of the Glasgow social security centre; and what plans he has to extend benefit processing work away from south-east England.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Glasgow centre is processing claims for income support faster and more accurately than the London offices from which the work was relocated. As ever, we are continuing to look for even greater improvements.

We plan to relocate the work of 21 London offices to centres in Glasgow, Belfast and Makerfield.

Miss Widdecombe: Does my hon. Friend agree that that greater speed and accuracy—I should be grateful if she would quantify it—has been achieved by the greater ease of retention and recruitment away from London and the south-east? Is not there a lesson in that not only for her Department but for others?

Mrs. Shephard: The policy of other Departments is a matter for them, but the Department of Health, in conjunction with the Department of Social Security, is transferring many staff to Leeds. On my hon. Friend's point about accuracy and speed, in the London offices there was a 29 per cent. error rate in the payment of income support. That has fallen steadily and now stands at 9 per cent., which is a vast improvement. Income support can now be assessed within five days, compared with up to 14 days previously. The problems in the London offices were, as she says, caused by the retention and recruitment of staff—a problem shared by the DSS with many large private concerns.

Dr. Godman: How do the error and processing rates in England compare with those in Scotland? Are not there still offices in Scotland that are undermanned in terms of the workload presented by too high unemployment and other social and economic circumstances? When will the Greenock office be given more staff to deal with these problems?

Mrs. Shephard: Performance in offices varies throughout the country. The figures that I cited for the group of London offices were the worst. I believe that I am right in saying that no office in Scotland has the problems of that group. The introduction of an operational strategy and directing staff to priority work mean that there will be a continuing improvement in the achievement of targets throughout the country, including Scotland. I remind the hon. Gentleman that that improvement has been achieved in Scotland through the relocated work in Glasgow.

Sir George Young: My hon. Friend will be aware that the three offices to have work relocated to Glasgow first were those at Ealing and that there has been a dramatic and welcome reduction in the time taken to process applications. Is she aware that the interface with the Department of Employment is the one causing delays because the office cannot keep up with the greater pace? Will my hon. Friend liaise with the Department to ensure that the momentum is maintained?

Mrs. Shephard: I assure my hon. Friend that we shall do all that is necessary to alleviate that problem.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Churches

69. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby representing the Church Commissioners, how much money was spent in the last year on the maintenance of archaeologically and architecturally significant churches.

Mr. Michael Alison (Second Church Estates Commissioner, representing the Church Commissioners): Responsibility for the maintenance of the Church of England's 16,400 churches and cathedrals, most of which are listed, rests with the parochial church councils and chapters. It is estimated that in 1989 the Church found in excess of £70 million for maintenance of those buildings,

mainly through the giving of its congregations, but including about £7 million state aid towards structural repairs of outstanding churches in use.

Mr. Banks: The right hon. Gentleman will be aware that the importance of these churches of great architectual significance extends beyond the congregations that use them. What support is given from central Government funds to assist in their maintenance? A number of significant Christian churches in, for example, the middle east are falling into a state of sad disrepair. Can anything be done, either by the Church Commissioners or through discussions with central Government, to provide much-needed funds for those wonderful buildings abroad?

Mr. Alison: I must ask the hon. Gentleman to allow me to take notice of the latter part of his question about churches overseas, but I agree that there are some fine churches with Anglican roots in European countries. I repeat that about £7 million of state aid flows, largely through English Heritage, into the main pool of resources for maintaining these splendid old churches.

Mr. Carrington: My right hon. Friend will be aware that considerable disquiet is expressed from time to time about the effects on the interior fixtures and fittings in churches of changing the use of churches from worship to alternative practices. Will he convey to the ecclesiastical authorities our concern to ensure that not only the fabric outside churches but the artistic heritage inside is preserved?

Mr. Alison: Yes, we pay careful attention to that problem. Not many months ago, the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) asked about the future of important organs in old churches. We have a procedure for ensuring that the artistic heritage is treated with the same respect as the old buildings.

Mr. Cryer: Each year applications are made for consent to demolish listed church buildings. Does the right hon. Gentleman have any idea of the numbers involved, as that would show the shortfall between the money raised locally and through English Heritage grants and that necessary to stop the demolition of churches, which has continued almost unabated for the past 20 to 30 years? We need to take action to stop further demolition.

Mr. Alison: The hon. Gentleman may be interested to know that, of 1,261 churches declared redundant between 1969 and 1989, only 297 have been demolished. So three quarters of them have been preserved and remain standing. In respect of the 297, a rigorous procedure had to be undergone before demolition could be authorised. Moreover, I am happy to say that more churches have been built than have been demolished. Three hundred and ninety-one new churches have been built, so we have made a net gain in the demolition stakes.

Mr. Latham: Is my right hon. Friend aware that members of my own parish church in Gretton in Northamptonshire are pleased to have received a grant of £34,000—I had the sterling support of my hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell)—but that that is only a drop in the ocean compared with the needs of many parish churches throughout Britain? We face a tremendous problem in maintaining our great heritage, and we must all bend our minds to deciding how best to achieve that.

Mr. Alison: I take my hon. Friend's point, but he will appreciate the significant performance of parishes up and down the country in raising as much as £70 million towards the maintenance of our elderly and historic churches. That shows that there is a vast source of good will and commitment to enable the Church as a voluntary association to do its own main burden-bearing.

South Africa

70. **Mr. Gow:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, what is the policy of the Church Commissioners about investment in the Republic of South Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alison: The Commissioners' policy is long established and has been well publicised. They do not invest in any South African company or in any other company where more than a small part of its business is in South Africa. When they invest in a company with a small stake in South Africa, they try to ensure that that company follows enlightened social and employment policies, as far as that is possible within the system of apartheid, of which they have repeatedly expressed their abhorrence. In common with the rest of the Church, the Commissioners welcome the important political developments since the end of 1989 and hope that the momentum will be sustained.

Mr. Gow: Is it really the case that the Bishop of Oxford has it in mind to bring legal proceedings involving the Church Commissioners concerning the investment policy of the Church of England? Instead of indulging in absurd litigation of this kind, should not the bishop and the Church be engaged in the business of saving the souls of the people, clothing the naked, feeding the hungry and healing the sick? Can my right hon. Friend assure the House that this mischievous bishop will not be considered for appointment to Canterbury?

Mr Alison: It is not, alas, in my gift—even on this important occasion—to give a definitive answer to my hon. Friend's final question. But I can confirm that the Bishop of Oxford appears to be intent on taking legal action against the Church of England. It could only bring the Church into disrepute if the bishop proceeded with his legal action against the Church Commissioners. The action is bound to be adversarial and will be perceived publicly as hostile. I hope that the Bishop of Oxford and his associates will decide to withdraw it.

The Church Commissioners derive no more than one third of 1 per cent. of their annual income from South African sources and effective action to eliminate even this tiny fraction could bring hugely disproportionate detriment to the Commissioners' beneficiaries—of whom my hon. Friend gave an enlightened and extended description.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Although one can understand the motives of the Bishop of Oxford, may I associate myself with the comments of the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) and the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison), answering on behalf of the Church Commissioners? The Bishop of Oxford's action seems to be a distraction from more important priorities. Will the right hon. Member for Selby urge the Church Commissioners to sustain their present policy of not investing in South Africa unless they are advised by the

Christian churches in South Africa to change that policy? Will they above all not be over-hasty in a decision to change their policy under pressure from the Government or anyone else, but rather lead and advise the Government on what their policy should be in the interests of the souls as well as the bodies of people in South Africa?

Mr. Alison: I take note of the hon. Gentleman's comments. However, I repeat that the Church Commissioners do not invest directly in South Africa. The complexity of disentangling even that tiny residual investment, which is associated with some of the largest household names in British industry, would be considerably detrimental for the clergy and pensioners whom we have to support. We could not await an imprimatur of approval from the churches in South Africa to consider changes in that large overall investment.

Christ Church, Bootle

71. **Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, if he will make a statement on the future of Christ church, Waterloo, Bootle.

Mr. Alison: A proposal to use Christ church, Waterloo as a nursing home is at present under consideration.

Mr. Field: Does the Commissioner accept that we believe that he must be apprehensive about giving a reply like that when the Church spends so much of its time saying that it looks after the inner city? One of the finest buildings in Bootle has been left empty for nearly 10 years. The diocese and the Commissioners are sitting on any application for the matter to be referred to the redundant churches fund. Will he allow that to happen this year?

Mr. Alison: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that 10 years of vacant standing in Bootle is an unacceptably long period. The hon. Gentleman will know that there have been several attempts to try to persuade alternative users to come forward and in many cases promising schemes foundered at the last moment. However, there is at least now a positive scheme for a useful future for the church and under the impetus of the hon. Gentleman's question I will do everything to accelerate a definitive decision and a constructive future use for the church.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Organisation

72. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what recent representations he has received from hon. Members about the organisation of the House; and if he will make a statement.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe): I receive representations on many aspects of this matter from hon. Members in all parts of the House. Hon. Members will know that I share a number of their concerns. Together with others, I am giving close consideration to ways of securing improvements and I hope to be in a position to make an announcement shortly.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Leader of the House aware that a real improvement that could be made in this place would be to start at a different time? Does he agree that the 2·30 pm kick-off is deliberately designed to allow hon. Members—mainly Tory Members—to make money by moonlighting outside this place? Is not it scandalous and bordering on the obscene when ex-Cabinet Ministers can pick up £250,000 for two days a week at Barclays bank and elsewhere and that others have four, five or six jobs while the workers are being told to go steady on wage rises and pensioners are being pushed through the hoop day in and day out? Why does not the Leader of the House introduce full-time Members of Parliament and get rid of the moonlighting?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am comforted by the fact that most of the country judges the fatuity of the points made by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) by the intemperance of his arguments. Even if they had any validity, they would be destroyed by the way in which he presents them. The hon. Gentleman may recall that there was an experiment such as he suggested, with the House sitting during the morning——

Mr. Skinner: I was not here then.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It was started even before the hon. Gentleman was here. He would have revelled in it. It was introduced under a substantial Labour majority in the House, but the experiment foundered after quite a short time.

Sir John Stokes: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the present system has served us well for a very long time and, furthermore, that those who were opposed to television—as I was—now find that many people look in to see what we are doing in the afternoon? In the morning they would be too busy to do that. Above all, we want hon. Members in this place who have time for other interests. This would be a dreadful place if we were all full-time employees. We must have outside experience which is most valuable.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to my hon. and gallant Friend for the calm way in which he presented the arguments that prevailed in the House when the matter was last considered about 20 years ago.

Dr. Cunningham: It is unsatisfactory for the Leader of the House to suggest that, because there was an experiment 20 years ago, we could not benefit from a review of the way in which we conduct our business now. This House seems to sit for more hours and more days than almost any other western legislature, and we are not conspicuously better at producing effective legislation. There is surely a case for us to examine again why we must sit for such long hours. Will the Leader of the House at least consider this matter under the auspicies of the Commission or in some other way and report back to the House?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman's point is entirely different from that of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). It is founded upon exactly the opposite premise. The hon. Member for Bolsover argues that the House is hardly manned at all, that we all do other things all the time and that, because of moonlighting, we are scarcely here. The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) suggests, with much more reason, that the House sits longer hours than are reasonable compared with other legislatures. A suggestion of that kind, related

also to the efficiency of our work, and put in the hon. Gentleman's moderate fashion, may deserve consideration. It is quite different from the point advanced by the hon. Member for Bolsover.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: In view of the distinguished work that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has done in opposing the Labour party's new policy review and the national executive, will my right hon. and learned Friend consider giving the hon. Gentleman special facilities and more accommodation in his new role of leader of the opposition to the Leader of the Opposition?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I shall consider the suggestion, but I fancy that it may be of more use to the nation, if not to the Labour party, for the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) to be exposed in public as much as possible.

Records (Storage)

73. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will provide secure accommodation for the storage of records in the keeping of the Chairman of the Select Committee on Members' Interests and the Select Committee on Defence.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have received no representations from either my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) or my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) that they are experiencing any particular difficulty in this matter, but I note the hon. Gentleman's solicitous concern.

Mr. Tam Dalyell: Would more secure accommodation speed up the process whereby Parliament can ask questions about this relationship between the Ministry of Defence and SGL? Can we chase the inquiries that Mr. Nicholas Comfort and others tell us the Conservative Chief Whip is making into the business links of the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) and clarify the Ministry of Defence's extremely carefully and ambiguously worded letter to me on possible American complaints about the hon. Member for Hampshire, East? Does the Leader of the House approve of the Chairman of a Select Committee having such public relations links in matters that his Select Committee is supposed to scrutinise?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Characteristically, the hon. Gentleman's points arise in no respect out of his original question. Equally characteristically, he knows that they are the subject of an investigation by the Select Committee on Members' Interests and cannot sensibly be dealt with by this sort of question and answer. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to raise any points of substance, he can and should refer them to that Select Committee.

Mr. Dickens: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the original question by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) was on the security of Select Committee records and reports and so on? Is not it a fact that many hon. Members are extremely careless with their papers? When they leave Select Committes they often throw away their papers very carelessly. Reporters in this place are past masters at going through wastepaper bins and paper sacks, and rightly so if hon. Members are careless. Should not we be more careful with our paperwork? Sometimes hon. Members get hysterical at the paperwork that is put before them. But when Committees sit in public, at the end of the day, a report is written and all the stuff that they are keeping secure is in the published report. Does my right hon. and learned Friend wonder why there is all this fuss?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: On the original question, all classified documents are registered and kept in secure facilities in secure areas. Members of Select Committees have access to them only under supervision in those circumstances. As I understand it, the Select Committee on Members' Interests would not have access to documents of that kind. My hon. Friend makes a fair point that was recently underlined by the Privileges Committee. Hon. Members should take greater care of important documents than some of them sometimes appear to do.

Mr. Cryer: Is not it true that the fact that the Chair of the Select Committee on Defence has outside interests related to defence——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the question on the Order Paper, which is about the storage of records.

Mr. Cryer: Is not it true that those links have caused consternation and that the Select Committee investigation, which will take up a great deal of time, may come across confidential documents that should be kept in secure places? Would not the whole matter be simplified if hon. Members who are Chairs of Select Committees did not have outside interests? Whatever the personal position, that would assure the public outside that there is no possible conflict of interest between the two.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The two questions are quite separate. The Select Committee on Members' Interests is investigating the broader question. Documents in the custody of the Select Committee on Defence are treated as top secret, registered and kept in secure facilities in secure areas.

Statues

74. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Lord President of the Council if he has any plans to arrange for additional suitable statues *(a)* of parliamentarians and *(b)* of animals near the precints of Westminster; and if will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My remit as Leader of the House does not extend beyond the parliamentary precincts. I therefore have no plans for statues of either parliamentarians or animals as my hon. Friend suggests. There will, however, be some interesting opportunities to place works of art in various forms in the new parliamentary building when it is occupied next year.

Mr. Greenway: Why are not statues of parliamentarians, excluding animals, erected until after they are dead? Will my right hon. and learned Friend encourage any suitable Committee to reconsider that decision? Although we do not want any mad cows in Parliament, will my right hon. and learned Friend promise to join me in leading a campaign to establish in or near Parliament a statue, with a fine steed, of the leader of any Government who succeed in preserving minimum standards for the export of horses and ponies after 1992?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As always, I am compelled to admire my hon. Friend's ingenuity. However, as the rule that would prevent a statue of him from being erected until 10 years after his death has been in force since 1925, it has a respectable ancestry.

Points of Order

32 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. peaker.

Mr. Donald Thompson (Calder Valley): On a point of der, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: One at a time, please. I call Mr. hompson first.

Mr. Thompson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, of hich I have given you notice. As you will know, morrow we are to discuss the community charge. A cent poll in my local newspaper has stated that most of y constituents are in favour of community charge pping. However, as there will be some legal action about mmunity charge capping in either the near future or the r distant future, will we be in order if we discuss all pects of the community charge tomorrow if we manage catch your eye?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman gave me notice of at question and I can give him the answer. The motion as not yet been tabled, and until I have seen it I cannot nsider the scope of the debate or whether it would be ppropriate for me to exercise my discretion with regard to e sub judice rule.

Mr. Thompson: Further to that point of order, Mr. peaker. Are you saying that the leader of the Social and iberal Democrats has not yet tabled the motion?

Mr. Speaker: That is exactly what I said.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): On a oint of order, Mr. Speaker. Has the Secretary of State for nergy given you notice that he intends to come to the ouse to make a statement about the future of the coal dustry? If reports from the British Coal Corporation are be believed, we are threatened with the extinction of the al industry in Scotland, the north-east and Wales and ith savage cuts in the coal industry in Nottinghamshire nd Yorkshire. The Secretary of State for Energy has pparently been appointed to take charge of co-ordinating overnment publicity, but we should like him to come to e House to tell us what he is doing to co-ordinate the overnment's energy policy.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. No, I have not had any request for statement on that matter, which I understand arose ecause of a leak in one of the newspapers.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I sk a question about the consistency of the use of arliamentary language? You, Mr. Speaker, are rightly uick to complain when hon. Members attack Members of he other place. Is it in order for the hon. Member for astbourne (Mr. Gow) to refer to the Bishop of Oxford as mischievous"? Is that parliamentarily acceptable?

Mr. Speaker: I understand that the Bishop of Oxford is ot at present a member of the House of Lords, although e may become one in due course.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Further to the point of order of the hon. Member for Calder Valley (Mr. Thompson). First—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Hughes: First, in accordance with normal procedure, tomorrow's motion will be tabled early this evening in the Table Office. That is often done on Opposition days by members of all parties. It will be available for the hon. Member for Calder Valley and others to view there, and it will give ample opportunity for the hon. Gentleman and others to criticise the community charge as a whole, as well as specific details of it.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the hon. Gentleman. It is for the convenience of the House if motions are tabled as early as possible, as it gives the entire House the opportunity to consider the motions on the Order Paper.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if you were given notice by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs that he would like to take time this afternoon to make a statement about the appalling events that have occurred in the past few hours in Israel and the occupied territories? Not only were seven unarmed Palestinian labourers shot, but now the Israeli defence force has put 1 million Palestinians under curfew in the Gaza strip and on the West Bank.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have not had such a request.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask Opposition Members who are rising to remember that there is a great demand to take part in today's Opposition day debate, especially from Scottish Members who wish to refer to Ravenscraig. The hon. Gentleman may finish his point of order, but it is not a matter for me.

Mr. Nellist: I accept that, Mr. Speaker, and I shall be brief.

Many hon. Members, perhaps on both sides of the House, would have wanted to make representations through the Foreign Secretary on how it is possible that, according to the IDF, one in a thousand people in the Gaza strip were wounded last night and this morning. That is 622 people out of a population of 650,000. That is horrific.

Mr. Speaker: It is indeed a very serious matter, but I have received no request for a statement.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This is a point of order that is directly for you, Mr. Speaker, related to the tabling of questions, on which hon. Members need advice, and it follows points that have already been made. I understand that the Secretary of State for Energy has been given an additional responsibility relating to the co-ordination of Government publicity. That is clearly outside his remit within that Department, and outside the work of the Department. What opportunity is there for hon. Members to table questions to him about his carrying out of that function?

Mr. Speaker: I am not certain that co-ordination of policy is a matter that is normally raised in the House. The

[Mr. Speaker]

hon. Gentleman's colleague on the Front Bench—the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham)—also co-ordinates policy.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Arising from question No. 73, you will have heard the Leader of the House announce that the Select Committe on Members' Interests has carried out an inquiry into the conflict of interests in the case of the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) between his interests as Chairman of the Select Committee on Defence and his commercial interests. That information has never been revealed by our Committee. The statement of the Leader of the House was a clear breach of privilege, as he has no right to make it. It has been the Committee's aim to retain as much secrecy as possible on those matters; the right hon. and learned Gentleman did precisely what the Committee has been trying to avoid for the past month.

Mr. Speaker: I am afraid that I did not quite get the thrust of that point of order—*[Interruption.]* I think that it is fairly common knowledge that that Select Committee is examining those matters.

CONTRACTS (APPLICABLE LAW) BILL *[LORDS]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Ordered,

That the Contracts (Applicable Law) Bill *[Lords]* be referred to a Second Reading Committee—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

Opposition Day

[12TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Ravenscraig

Mr. Speaker: I must announce to the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister. I repeat what I said a moment ago, that there is great demand to participate in the debate. Although it is not possible for me to put a limit on speeches because this is a half-day debate, if hon. Members limit their speeches to 10 minutes, many will stand a good chance of being called.

3.39 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I beg to move,

That this House deplores the decision by British Steel to close the hot strip mill at Ravenscraig with major job losses; recognises that the hot strip mill and a major new investment programme for Ravenscraig are essential to ensure a viable future for the Scottish steel industry; calls upon British Steel to reverse its catastrophic decision; and urges Her Majesty's Government at every level to unite in opposing British Steel's decision and to do everything possible to reverse a closure which threatens the future of the steel industry in Scotland.

I do not need to spend much time convincing the House of the importance of the issue and of the significance of Ravenscraig to the Scottish economy. It is easy to draw unpleasant conclusions and predict dire consequences of the recent developments and the announced closure of the strip mill. We on this side try to avoid the doomsday argument and try not to proclaim daily that the end is nigh. Too many people in Scottish politics see disasters as a political opportunity privately to be welcomed, even if publicly deplored.

Nevertheless, there is undoubtedly a question mark and genuine anxiety not just about the 770 jobs whose loss is immediately threatened, but about the whole future of the Ravenscraig plant. If, at the end of 1994, it is producing steel and slab alone, incomplete and vulnerable, clearly problems will arise. That fact is bluntly recognised in the press release of 16 May issued by British Steel, which made the announcement about the strip mill:

"The impact of the continuous casting investments at Port Talbot and Llanwern will, in due course, also affect steel production at Ravenscraig so that production of steel at that works beyond 1994 will be dependent upon the economic and commercial scene and the demand for steel slabs."

In the context of what has happened, that is less than a ringing commitment to the future of the Scottish steel industry.

Certainly everyone in Scottish politics will be uncomfortably aware that the Arthur Young report, which was produced in February 1988, set out what it saw as a possible scenario, leading the total dismantlement of the Scottish steel industry. So far, it is unpleasantly and uncannily on course to become reality.

Other important plants in Scotland—Clydesdale and Dalzell—have their problems and will undoubtedly be the subject of debate on another occasion. The House, and certainly the men who work at Clydesdale and Dalzell, will forgive me and will understand if I focus on Ravenscraig's future.

The mood of Scotland is undoubtedly that we should unite to fight the possible closure and the immediate threat

to the strip mill. I have no wish to make an abrasive speech. Like everyone else in Scotland, I seek co-operation and the widest possible coalition from which we can attempt a counter-attack on this issue. However, the Secretary of State would not expect me to fail to record my disagreement and, indeed, dismay at the way in which the matter has been handled until now. We are paying the price for the Government's hands-off attitude, for their insistence that this is a matter simply for the commercial judgment of British Steel and for giving the impression that they have no particular remit or responsibility for the matter. All too often Ministers have looked like passive spectators.

On Wednesday there were supplementary questions on the private notice question from the hon. Members for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim), who is in his place, for Bromsgrove (Sir H. Miller), who I am glad to see has come to listen to the debate, and for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow). I should like to suggest that they in their enthusiasms were fringe figures and that in suggesting that Government involvement in the future of Ravenscraig was improper, they were ploughing a lonely course. The trouble is that they seem to reflect the views of the Department of Trade and Industry all too accurately. That is one of our problems.

For a long time it has been clear that British Steel has a less than full commitment to its Scottish operations. If we are to avoid the disaster that the Arthur Young report predicts, there must be a sustained and urgent effort. My charge against the Secretary of State for what happened in the past is that there is no evidence that that effort was made.

I met the right hon. and learned Gentleman in December 1989—I remember the conversation well—when a number of colleagues and I expressed our keen alarm about what was happening to the three major steel-making centres in Scottish industry. There were also a number of occasions when the Secretary of State was pressed again during Scottish Question Time—I rehearsed that during the questions following the private notice question—and he told us that he would meet the chairman of British Steel in the relatively near future or shortly. Unfortunately, on 2 May the term "shortly" had a particularly sinister significance, because the Secretary of State was summoned for the wrong reasons—to be given, in effect, formal intimation of execution.

Press speculation—the Secretary of State will know of the article that appeared in *The Observer*—has suggested that the right hon. and learned Gentleman knew well what was going on. That article stated:

"Inquiries by *The Observer* reveal that far from learning for the first time last Tuesday of plans to close the plant, Rifkind and the Scottish Office had been fully appraised of British Steel's intentions as they developed."

The Secretary of State has strongly and hotly denied that, and I am very happy to accept his assurances on that point. However, it leads to the inescapable conclusion that, if he did not know, he should have done, and that if he had asked, he might well have been told.

The long period of inaction that led up to last week's meeting with Sir Robert Scholey left British Steel unhindered in its plans to put in place an unsound strategy, which had disastrous consequences for our cause. I believe that the Secretary of State posted himself missing from the field of action during that time.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Although accepting the Secretary of State's assurances, does the hon. Gentleman find it extraordinary that, given that the chairman of British Steel had made it clear two years ago that, eventually, he wanted to close the hot strip mill and that, in the past few months, he refused to meet either the Secretary of State or the Minister of State, the Secretary of State did not wonder whether something was up? Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is rather amazing that it came as such a surprise to the right hon. and learned Gentleman at the end of the day?

Mr. Dewar: The hon. Gentleman has given a summary of my remarks and I agree with him.

The tragedy upon which we must concentrate is the fact that it will not be easy now to divert British Steel from its chosen course. Privatisation has weakened the public interest that can be brought to bear and the leverage that could be exercised. The prospects for altering the decision would have been infinitely better if those chances had been taken before that decision was publicly announced. The Secretary of State must bear some responsibility for that. I welcome the fact, however, that the Secretary of State had been converted by circumstance to a more positive attitude in the past 10 days. He has made clear his concern and the fact that he wishes to see the decision reversed. I understand that he had a positive meeting with the stewards from Ravenscraig this morning and that they took some encouragement from what he had to say. I would be unhelpful and churlish if I did not welcome that.

The debate will give us the chance to clarify not only the Secretary of State's position, but that of the Government. It is extremely important that that opportunity is taken. The Secretary of State has used words such as "deplore", and said that he is "disturbed". He has stated that the Scottish Office

"seek to persuade British Steel".—[*Official Report*, 16 May 1990; Vol. 172, c. 887.]

That is all right as far as it goes, but Scotland will demand something a little more positive and energetic than is suggested by those words. If we are to have any chance of success in our task, we cannot go at it by way of apology, afterthought or on a "sorry-to-bother you" basis. That will not impress Sir Robert Scholey and Mr. Llowarc of British Steel. We cannot have a Secretary of State who speaks in constrained language and leaves the impression, at least with some of us, that, while he is certainly trying to satisfy Scottish opinion, he is also keen not to sacrifice the good opinion of colleagues who may not agree with him.

There has been an attempt at various times to downgrade the issue. It has been suggested that the future of Ravenscraig is of importance to Lanarkshire, but not to the Scottish economy as a whole. I have been told by journalists of the words used by the Secretary of State at a press briefing—I hope that I have got the words accurate—when he said that the job loss was not

"dramatic in itself although disappointing to those affected".

It seems that the Secretary of State is trying to put a pedestrian cloak over an industrial crisis of sharp proportions, which also involves a number of personal tragedies. What we seek from the Secretary of State today is a definition of where he stands and, more importantly, what he intends to do. We are looking for a commitment by the Government as a whole that goes well beyond simply polite and cursory inquiries at British Steel headquarters.

[Mr. Dewar]

My second point to the Secretary of State—I hope that he will be able to help me—is that he needs allies in every part of his party, the Government and the country. If he knocks on the door of Sir Robert Scholey, he may well be seen as a predictable visitor—a dutiful nod to Scottish opinion—and discounted as such. If representatives from the Department of Trade and Industry or the Prime Minister were to come and argue the case, say that Ravenscraig was something of central importance to the Scottish economy and there should be reconsideration, that would shake British Steel's complacency, and be a central part of the campaign.

We have been told be the Secretary of State that his Cabinet colleagues are in total agreement with his line. Indeed, the vice-chairman of the Scottish Conservative party, at a meeting of the steel core group in Strathclyde region on Saturday, said that there was total agreement among Cabinet colleagues. I hope that that is true, and welcome it because I recognise that in Scotland there is an almost united opinion.

The hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), who is just leaving the Chamber, was quoted as saying:

"The future direction of the campaign should be to persuade British Steel to invest in Scotland and to take advantage of the magnificent workforce."

I agree with that and think that almost everyone in Scotland would do so. I hope the fact that the words came from the hon. Member for Stirling may reassure some of the Government's Back Benchers that my position is not ideologically unsound, on that issue.

We need evidence of positive support beyond the Secretary of State for Scotland. If hon. Members remember what the Leader of the House said last Thursday and the previously expressed views of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, they will understand why there is a great deal of doubt about whether that support is forthcoming in Scotland and I suspect, possibly just as importantly, in British Steel headquarters.

I hope that the Secretary of State will not think that I am making a cheap point—it is not meant to be—but I cannot help thinking that it is of some significance that there is no Minister from the Department of Trade and Industry in the Chamber to listen to this debate. At best, that is discourteous and I fear that it may confirm the political signifiance of the split that I believe exists. I hope that my fear can be laid to rest by the Secretary of State.

I want the Secretary of State to be successful in this matter, but he needs the help and support of his colleagues. He must not approach the task as someone who has been given a licence to argue a case because of his special difficulties, while the Government's general line remains unsympathetic. That would be a recipe for a cosmetic exercise bound to failure.

I shall briefly outline the reasons why the Government should be involved. I do not think that British Steel is just another private sector company, as has been again and again suggested by Conservative Members. Ministers hold a golden share. I appreciate that they say it is for limited purposes, but it exists and they do not normally hold golden shares in just another private sector company. They are responsible for the guarantees that have been given. Those guarantees, particularly on the issue of the possible sale of assets in Scotland, require considerable clarification.

I have looked carefully at the statement made by the present Minister for Health, then Minister with responsibility for industry, in the House, and it is not clear whether that guarantee applies only to a closure at the end of 1994 or would apply after 1994. Having discussed such matters more recently than many other people with British Steel, I suspect that there may be potential for a dispute about what that undertaking is worth. That should be clarified.

The golden share and guarantees are evidence that we are considering a sensitive issue with widespread economic importance. It is not a routine, undramatic loss of another 770 jobs, even with all the pain and bitterness that that would produce. It will have a knock-on effect on all the steel industry in Scotland and the Scottish economy as a whole. Sir Robert Scholey, with his narrow and no doubt legally justified point of view as chairman of British Steel, may want to shrug off some of those effects, but the Government cannot.

I am told today by ScotRail that 50 per cent. of the revenue of British Rail freight in Scotland is produced by Ravenscraig. There will be a substantial impact on the brave new world of privatised electricity of Scottish Power if it loses what I suspect is the biggest customer in its portfolio. I know that the new private company which is to replace the Clyde port authority in a few months, if the private legislation gets through the House with the continuing support of the Government, will depend heavily for income on the landing dues at Hunterston, the loss of which will knock a massive hole in its financial position. I mention all these because they are examples of the wider public interest which have clearly not been taken into the reckoning by British Steel when reaching its decision but which should be dealt with by the Government.

Everyone who has followed the debate will understand what I mean when I say that national press reaction to what has happened in Scotland has been particularly unfortunate. The dismay with which the news has been greeted in Scotland has met with some derision in the press. The decision to close the strip mill has been seen as a virtuous exercise in commercial realism.

That point of view has been put in trenchant terms by the *Financial Times* and *The Independent*, and in offensive terms by the *Evening Standard*, which some hon. Members will know as London's local evening paper.

"Ravenscraig must close",

it tells us. Perhaps I can give a flavour of the article:

"The Scots, who have become subsidy junkies as successive Governments . . . have tried to bribe them with ever larger handouts at the expense of the comparatively little-subsidised English taxpayer, will no doubt wail like a trampled bagpipe at the removal of British Steel's financial support for Ravenscraig."

That is in no way a useful contribution to the debate.

By way of a corrective, I made some inquiries in the Library which referred me to an interesting debate in the House in which a Transport Minister pointed out that subsidy for transport in south-east England will rise from this year's £387 million, in constant terms, to £669 million in 1992; and that the underground in London will get £2·2 billion investment over the next three years. I make no complaint about that; I accept that it is necessary. I make the point only by way of a corrective against those who call

our legitimate anxieties the tortured wail of a bagpipe. It might be of interest to some hon. Members to know that the Scottish Office budget for industry, energy, trade and employment this year is £251 million. That begins to show why we do not sympathise with some of the harsh and crude language, bordering on the insulting, which has entered the debate.

I warn the House that it is a comforting theory to say that there is no need to look at the merits of a closure of this sort—that management has decreed and management must always be right. But in this case the management has got it wrong. There was a letter in *The Scotsman* today from Cardinal Gordan Gray, a much respected leader of the Roman Catholic community in Scotland. He described himself as appalled by what has happened, and protested that there was no morality in the market place. I recognise that that is a controversial view, but I stress that one does not need to agree with the cardinal on that point to agree with those of us who argue that it would be tragic and deeply wrong to close the strip mill at Ravenscraig.

This is not a smokestack industry to be decently buried; it is not a lame duck industry producing an unwanted product at an unacceptable price. We have it on the authority of the Prime Minister herself that the work force have done well—they produce steel at 2·33 man hours per tonne, which is as low as any plant in Europe. The workers are not going because they are inefficient or because they are loss-making. I cannot quote figures on that, but I believe that it is true. They are going because British Steel has made an assumption that the capacity is not needed and it can cut it because the market will remain depressed. That assumption can and should be challenged.

Strip production in British Steel at the moment is about 5·5 million tonnes. Strip capacity at the two Welsh plants will be about 6 million tonnes. We must bear in mind the fact that the number of car units to be produced in this country will rise from 1·2 million to 2 million with the arrival of Japanese firms; we must remember the increase in North sea activity; the prediction that the European market over the next four or five years will grow by 1 per cent. a year; and the fact that we have a substantial direct deficit in steel trade with the rest of Europe, and with Germany in particular. So is it right to cut our capacity calculations so neat and assume that we cannot put any of these things right and pick up an increasing share of our own market?

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): The hon. Gentleman mentioned the expansion of the British car industry to 2 million car units per year. I accept that that is a realistic target for the end of this decade. Why did Scotland not want to be part of that development? Its work force rejected the setting up of the Ford factory in Dundee. Many of us would be more sympathetic to the Scottish cause if it did not turn its back on such high-tech industries.

Mr. Dewar: I shall answer that petty point with a rather more serious one. The hon. Gentleman should address himself to the question why, when there is to be a big increase in demand for steel for the car industry, British Steel assumes it will not supply that demand. That is the case for the survival of Ravenscraig.

My last point is rather unusual, because I shall conclude by looking at the motion and the Government amendment. This debate is not an end in itself. It should not be seen as an empty political exercise, which is how some of our debates are seen. I have concentrated on government and the parliamentary campaign, but every section of Scottish life, including, to be fair, the Scottish Conservative party, is anxious to contribute to the fight to save the strip mill at Ravenscraig. The work force, under the leadership of the shop steward, Tommy Brennan, and his colleagues, has led by example and deserves better than this announcement.

I shall conclude by speaking about the role of Government. I am depressed by the Government amendment because it will undermine confidence in the Secretary of State's good intentions and commitments and his readiness to go into battle on behalf of the plant. The Government amendment says that this is a matter for "commercial judgment". It certainly expresses concern about the job losses that would follow the closure of the strip mill. However, the only thing it does in terms of action is to invite British Steel to explain and defend its decision. It does not commit the Government to anything and does not promise any action. There is no hint of ministerial pressure or of the Department of Trade and Industry getting its hands dirty in a good cause.

In reply to a private notice question tabled by me, the Secretary of State for Scotland said:

> "I agree with the hon. Gentleman about the desirability of doing that which can be done to reverse the decision."—[*Official Report*, 16 May 1990; Vol. 172, c. 888.]

The key question that we want answered by the Secretary of State is, what can be done? He spoke about

"that which can be done".

Does that amount simply to inviting British Steel to explain and defend its decisions? If that is the strength of the Government's involvement and of Ministers' imagination and commitment, it will not do.

It is quite disgraceful that the shop stewards were given the news by the local director and have had absolutely no access to top management. They have not seen Jake Stewart, the head of the strip division, or anyone else of similar seniority. That should be put right. What could be more tentative than merely to invite British Steel to defend its decision? We are looking for positive evidence of Government action in support of the campaign. The Government's response will be seen as totally inadequate in Scotland, and the House should recognise it.

When we tackle British Steel, we want to know that the Government are fighting our corner. I say unashamedly that, if the Secretary of State wants to put himself at the head of that campaign, we will give him every conceivable support and will be grateful for that sign of initiative and energy. If he does not do that, it will mean that the Government propose to do nothing apart from saying to the work force of the strip mill in Ravenscraig, "Perhaps you would like to explain why you are about to be executed." When that little exercise has been carried out, that will be the end of the Government's involvement. That will not do, and it will be seen not to do.

Our motion calls for reversal of the decision to close, asks British Steel to think again, and asks the Government "at every level" to join the struggle to save the plant

"and to do everything possible to reverse"

the decision. The first part of that motion is not original. It is almost exactly the substance of an early-day motion signed last week by all Tory Back-Bench Members representing Scottish constituencies. The second part

[Mr. Dewar]

spells out the essential minimum and a Government commitment in which I understand the Secretary of State believes. It outlines what Scotland expects.

I know that it would be extremely difficult for the Government to do this, but I ask them not to oppose our motion and not to insist on their amendment. There is no heresy, there is nothing unacceptable or out of line with what the Secretary of State has represented as his position, at least in Scotland, in our motion. If the Secretary of State will not accept our motion, I urge him to spell out why he will not do so. If he did, it would unite Scotland and create the kind of platform from which we could mount a campaign which had a genuine hope of reversing the decision and saving the plant.

4.5 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'recognises that British Steel's investment and operational decisions are a matter for the commercial judgment of the company; nevertheless expresses its concern about the potential employment consequences of the company's decision to close the hot strip mill at Ravenscraig; recognises the considerable productivity achievements of the Ravenscraig workforce; invites British Steel to explain and defend its decision; and deplores any attempt to extract political capital from this event rather than offering any constructive solutions.'.

I listened with care to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar). Despite all the fine rhetoric, the House waited in vain to hear exactly what he would have done in these circumstances if he were in my position. I am aware that we are in government, but the House and the people of Scotland are entitled to know what, if the Labour party believes that action from the Government is required and if this is meant to be more than simply empty rhetoric, a Labour Government would be doing in such circumstances. There was not a scintilla of information from the hon. Gentleman on that point.

Mr. Dewar: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): The hon. Gentleman had his chance.

Mr. Dewar: I am responding to the Secretary of State's invitation.

It is unfortunate that this decision was announced before Government influence could be brought to bear. If the Department of Trade and Industry, the Secretary of State or the Prime Minister were to see Sir Robert Scholey and put to him the sentiments that the Secretary of State had been putting in Scotland, I would see it as strong evidence of the Government's intention to reverse the decision.

Mr. Rifkind: If the action required by the hon. Gentleman, and the action that he says that a Labour Government would take, were simply that different Ministers would speak to British Steel than are speaking to it now, he cannot claim that that adds up to a fundamentally different approach to these matters.

Over the past few days, there has been great concern in Scotland, from all political parties and across the industrial spectrum, about the announcement by British Steel last week. In the light of some of the comments in newspapers in the south and others, it might be helpful to explain why that concern is felt so deeply. There is perhaps an impression in some quarters that the only point at issue is the loss of 770 jobs. Similar announcements in various parts of the United Kingdom have not led to similar reactions.

Irrespective of political views, all of us in Scotland know that the issues involved are wider and greater than that and that the concern is, first, that closure of the hot strip mill could severely weaken, and might lead to the closure of, Ravenscraig as a whole, with the loss of about 3,200 jobs in an area of high unemployment. Secondly, if that happened—it must be seen as a possibility in the light of the announcement by British Steel—for all practical purposes it would signal the end of the steel industry in Scotland. Therefore, wider issues are involved than simply the number of jobs to be lost from closure of the hot strip mill.

An additional important factor is that over the past three years, throughout the United Kingdom, but including Ravenscraig, British Steel has been making some remarkable achievements. Privatisation, far from leading to a decline in the industry as a whole, has brought tremendous new profitability and competitiveness, for which British Steel is to be congratulated and admired. It is a remarkable achievement. It is also significant that throughout that period Ravenscraig, including the hot strip mill, contributed to that profitability and was part of the success story. That makes last week's announcement much more significant.

As far back as October 1985, Sir Robert Haslam, the then chairman of British Steel, said in evidence to the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs: "Ravenscraig is in profit." If that was true in 1985, the tremendous progress made by British Steel and by Ravenscraig since suggests that the company's profitability must, if anything, be greater rather than lesser.

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan): Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Rifkind: I will do so shortly.

Not only Ravenscraig but its hot strip mill have been functioning to substantial effect. The House may recall that five years ago British Steel contemplated closing the mill but had second thoughts. It turned out that those second thoughts were better than its first thoughts, because far from the market for the mill's products declining, it substantially increased—partly due to British Steel's own success—and the mill was fully utilised.

Another aspect is the dearth of information available to British Steel's employees. I say without qualification that we all recollect the point made by British Steel to its work force at Ravenscraig a few years ago, that the best prospect for the future of the plant, including the hot strip mill, would be increased productivity and competitiveness, and good industrial relations. I do not believe that there has been one iota of criticism from any quarter about the way that Ravenscraig's work force responded. Although that does not guarantee the work force a future livelihood—nor can it—it imposes an obligation on British Steel, in the event of a very unpalatable announcement having to be made, to give its employees the reasons for it.

Mr. Sillars: The Secretary of State mentioned a remark made by Sir Robert Haslam to a previous Select

Committee on Scottish Affairs. I draw attention to the words of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's amendment, which

"invite British Steel to explain and defend its decision".

To whom is British Steel to

"explain and defend its decision"?

Is the Secretary of State aware that the people of Scotland will take it as a clear sign of the Government's determination not only totally to condemn British Steel but to examine the whole issue properly if he, the Leader of the House and the Cabinet announce this week that they have overcome the problems involved and will convene a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs very quickly, for the single purpose of investigating British Steel's contention that it is taking the right commercial decisions? It seems to me that a Select Committee would be the right instrument for judging whether British Steel's action is correct. Will the Secretary of State back that proposal?

Mr. Rifkind: I note the hon. Gentleman's comment, but I cannot help but recollect that when we last had such a Select Committee his party refused to be represented on it. Such a proposal does not sound very convincing coming from that quarter.

The hon. Member for Garscadden asked what role the Government should play in the circumstances that have arisen. I refer to the interesting and constructive remarks by Mr. Brennan, the leader of the Ravenscraig shop stewards, whom I met this morning. He began by telling me that he wanted to make it absolutely clear that the case for the hot strip mill and for Ravenscraig as a whole must be fought and determined on commercial grounds, and on those grounds alone. Mr. Brennan went out of his way to emphasise to me the point that he has made publicly: that political campaigns and emotional appeals to British Steel or anyone else would be counter-productive. It is a sign of the changing position in Scotland, as throughout the United Kingdom, that Ravenscraig's leading shop steward should have made that point.

I noted that in its editorial this morning the *Glasgow Herald*, which serves the west of Scotland, said:

"No one is advocating old-style interventionism. Everyone agrees with Mr. Rifkind that the case has to be argued on a commercial and not an emotional basis."

It should be understood by all hon. Members that the work force and many others in Scotland believe that this matter will ultimately be determined by British Steel. There is no question of the Government issuing orders to a company, whether it be British Steel or any other, about what it should do with its plant and factory. British Steel will reach its own decision, but that is not against the interests of the Scottish economy.

The hon. Member for Garscadden is responsible for the motion on the Order Paper. Unlike the early-day motion that was tabled a few days ago, it calls on the Government to do all within their power without specifying what that might be. That is a throwback to a previous age, and I certainly could not recommend that my hon. Friends support such a motion.

Mr. Dewar: I hope that the Secretary of State will spell out what he will do and what steps he is taking to fight the case on the commercial grounds to which he refers and which he supports.

Mr. Rifkind: I wish to continue my remarks and address the points that the hon. Gentleman made.

Mr. Alex Eadie (Midlothian): It is an issue of commercial judgment. The convenor of Ravenscraig, Tommy Brennan, said that it is a commercial, viable industry. To assist the right hon. and learned Gentleman on the question of commercial judgment, does he recollect that he stood still when the South of Scotland Electricity Board decided to import 1 million tonnes of Chinese coal, which was grossly impractical? The market is not always correct. The right hon. and learned Gentleman will agree that that proved a disastrous contract, which he could have stopped.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman and I will have to agree to differ on the merits of his point.

The Government are not, cannot be expected to be, and are not expected by most of those in Scotland to be responsible for trying to run the steel industry. That does not mean that the Government can simply be disinterested when decisions are announced that have significant employment implications. That does not apply only in Scotland, and it cannot be relevant to British Steel alone. If any major United Kingdom company, such as British Aerospace or ICI, were to withdraw from the United Kingdom, of course Ministers would be concerned and would wish to discuss it with the chairman of the relevant company. They would wish to hear the reasons for that and to express their concern. The company would decide what its decision should be, but Ministers must be concerned.

I say to the House and to those commentators in the south who have expressed disagreement with such an approach that that would be relevant irrespective of which part of the United Kingdom was affected. British Steel, as the amendment states, should recognise the concern that has been expressed and explain and defend its decision. If it believes that there are justifiable commercial grounds for a decision that would have significant and serious implications for the economy in an important part of Scotland, it is not unreasonable to expect it to explain its reasons, especially to the work force. I will certainly be urging it to do so.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire) *rose*——

Mr. Rifkind: May I continue? Many hon. Members wish to contribute to the debate. The more that I give way, the fewer hon. Members will be able to do so.

The hon. Member for Garscadden said that Ravenscraig is of great importance to the economy of Scotland. As I said in the Scottish Grand Committee, and it is important to emphasise it, Ravenscraig is crucial to the well-being of the people of Motherwell and to the economy of Lanarkshire because of the employment implications. It has significance and implications for the wider Scottish economy, just as any other major employer does. It is not the largest employer in Scotland, and Labour Members do a disservice to the cause that they wish to advocate by overstating their points. There are a substantial number of large employers in Scotland who make a useful and valuable contribution to the Scottish economy. One thinks of Ferranti with 6,000 employees, the Rosyth dockyard with 5,300 employees, Rolls-Royce with 4,960 employees and similar companies.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): How many steel mills?

Mr. Rifkind: By all means let the Opposition emphasise the serious and severe implications for the Lanarkshire economy and suggest the implications for the wider Scottish economy, but they know as well as I do that the importance of Ravenscraig is similar to that of IBM, Ferranti and other companies of a comparable size. It is not appropriate to suggest that different fundamental considerations apply.

Only one in 300 employees in Scotland works at Ravenscraig—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] I am sorry, but if the Opposition think that exaggeration and emotion help their case, they are doing a disservice to the people of Ravenscraig and I will have no truck with it.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): No one denies that there are bigger employers than Ravenscraig in Scotland. But can the right hon. and learned Gentleman name any other concern which, by its closure, would withdraw 50 per cent. of the freight transport from British Rail, almost 25 per cent. of the electricity consumed and a huge amount of fuel and cause such massive repercussions in terms of services throughout Scotland as would Ravenscraig? I doubt whether the right hon. and learned Gentleman could find one such concern.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman has a good case, but he must not exaggerate it. He referred to the use of electricity, but he should know that 1·5 per cent. of the total output of power in Scotland goes to Ravenscraig. Ravenscraig is as important as any other customer would be. The hon. Gentleman must not spoil a good case by exaggerating it. I do not in any way intend to underestimate the importance of Ravenscraig, but I will not be tempted into suggesting that somehow the future of the Scottish economy depends on one Scottish plant.

Mr. Dickens: I hope that I shall be helpful. Because of the social consequences and differences between the contracts with British Rail, the Scottish electricity authorities and so on, does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that if the management of British Steel could negotiate keener prices with these companies that depend so much on Ravenscraig, Ravenscraig could again become a commercial consideration?

Hon. Members: It is.

Mr. Rifkind: As my hon. Friend the Member for Littleworth and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) will realise from the response to his intervention, the point at issue is whether at present there is a good commercial case for maintaining the hot strip mill at Ravenscraig. We hope that British Steel will provide proper information on that point.

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West) *rose*——

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East) *rose*——

Mr. Rifkind: I should like to continue my remarks because I am conscious that many hon. Members wish to take part.

Mr. Dewar: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way on his latter point?

Mr. Rifkind: If I gave way to the hon. Gentleman, I should have to give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, North-West (Mr. Grylls) and the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang). I must ask the hon. Member for Garscadden not to insist.

The hon. Member for Garscadden asked me about contacts that we have had with British Steel over the past few months, so it might be helpful if I put them on the record. There have been meetings with Sir Robert Scholey at ministerial level, a meeting between my officials and the chief executive and ministerial and official correspondence with the company. There have also been telephone contacts between my officials and British Steel, both at plant management level and with the chief executive. During that period, I instructed my officials to prepare a paper making the commercial case for further investment at Dalzell in the context of British Steel's current review of plate strategy. A decision to expand Dalzell would, of course, have consequences for the future security of steelmaking at Ravenscraig. It can be seen, therefore, that over the past few months we have had ongoing contact with British Steel about its operations in Scotland.

Three weeks ago, I asked Sir Robert to come to see me to discuss various matters—in particular, the Scottish Office paper on plate mill investment. He replied that he would be willing to do so but that he particularly wished to see me on 15 May as his board was meeting the previous day and he wished to inform me of decisions likely to be taken by his board. I was concerned by the implications of that and asked Sir Robert to come to see me before the board met. We had an informal meeting on 3 May, but he gave me no information then regarding the proposals that were likely to be put to his board. Nevertheless, I asked him whether the board would be considering plate mill investment as it affected Dalzell but he said that a decision on that was unlikely for some months. I made it clear to him that, if the board considered the future of the hot strip mill at that meeting, I hoped that, given its contribution to British Steel's profitability, the mill would not be closed as that would have implications for the future of Ravenscraig as a whole and I would find it necessary to express my views in the event of such an announcement. Sir Robert quite properly declined to comment on what his board was about to consider.

My next meeting with Sir Robert was on 15 May. The suggestion that the Scottish Office has had no contact with British Steel over the past few months is completely bogus.

I have been asked whether there might be an alternative purchaser for British Steel's assets in Scotland. Hon. Members have referred to the commitment in the prospectus, as has my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. The shop stewards themselves have emphasised that that is not their first option. They wish British Steel to continue to have responsibility for its assets at Ravenscraig, and that is a view that many will share. It would be helpful if British Steel could say whether it believes that the circumstances referred to in the prospectus, in which it would contemplate an alternative private sector purchaser for its assets, now pertain. If British Steel does not believe that that stage has been reached, it would help if it would outline the circumstances in which such arrangements would apply and it would also help if British Steel could confirm that it sees itself as remaining committed to such a course. We must be clear that, for that option to be worth considering further, it is necessary not only that there should be a willing seller but

that there should be a potential buyer. If there is a potential buyer at home or abroad, it would help our continuing debate if that interest made itself felt.

Mr. Dewar: During our exchanges following the private notice question on Wednesday, the Secretary of State said unambiguously that he deplored the decision that had been made and that he sought to have it reversed. Is that still his position, and how does he intend to achieve that?

Mr. Rifkind: It is indeed still my position. Everything that I said to the House last week remains exactly and without qualification my position. I am happy to give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that he seeks.

Mr. Grylls: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that all Conservative Members believe that he is acting entirely honourably in taking his present line and seeking more information from British Steel about its proposals? None of us would do any less for our constituencies. But will he bear in mind British Steel's record in job creation, given that since 1976 British Steel has created 45,000 new jobs at Corby, Consett, Sheffield and Shotton, where there had been huge job losses? New jobs can be created if the closure finally goes ahead.

Mr. Rifkind: Of course my hon. Friend is correct, and there are good precedents to suggest that if, unfortunately, jobs are lost in a locality—even in an area of high unemployment—it is not the end of the world. Having said that, one hopes that that can be averted in the first place because there is a significant time lag in creating new employment or attracting it to the area and, in the meantime, significant unemployment results. Our main objective is to establish whether British Steel will be prepared to reconsider the decision that it announced last week.

We must all be realistic. We cannot assume that the representations will succeed. As Secretary of State for Scotland, I have a responsibility to consider the implications for Motherwell if the hot strip mill closed next year. Accordingly, on a contingency basis, I am asking the Industry Department for Scotland and the Scottish Development Agency, together with the other relevant interests including local authority and private sector interests, to consider what could be done to encourage new employment and investment in Motherwell in the event of the hot strip mill closing—[HON. MEMBERS: "You are giving up."] No, it is not a question of giving up. Opposition Members would be the first to criticise in nine months' time if the campaign to save the hot strip mill did not succeed and if the Government had done nothing to anticipate that possibility. I want to be entirely frank with the people of Motherwell. We know and Opposition Members know perfectly well that there can be no guarantee for a campaign of this sort. My responsibility is to use the facilities available to anticipate one possible outcome and, on a contingency basis, to plan what that would involve. I make no apology for that.

We will also want to explore with British Steel the statement that it made last week that the company will take positive steps through British Steel Industry Limited to assist in the creation of new jobs in Motherwell. Clearly, that would be an important component.

Of course, our primary desire is for British Steel to respond to the concern that has been expressed. If it cannot explain and defend the decision that it announced last week, we will be delighted if it reverses that decision. There is already a precendent for British Steel doing just that: three years ago it reversed an intention to close the hot strip mill and that was found to have been a wise change of mind because the mill went on to high productivity and to contribute towards the profitability of British Steel's operations. British Steel had second thoughts then, and I very much hope that it will have second thoughts now. That would benefit the future of the people of Motherwell and Lanarkshire, and it might also make an important contribution to British Steel's ongoing profitability.

4.42 pm

Dr. Jeremy Bray (Motherwell, South): I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for calling me early in this debate. I am also grateful to you and to other hon. Members on both sides of the House for your good wishes following my recent heart operation. I am sure that hon. Members will understand if I do not stay for the whole debate.

The closure of the great Ravenscraig works and Dalzell works in my constituency would be a grievous blow to Lanarkshire and to the whole of Scotland, with the loss of 10,000 jobs and £100 million a year in income. The social consequences do not bear thinking about. It would not be the death of the local community, nor the end for the steel workers of Ravenscraig. They are too fine workers, there is too great a strength and vitality in the local community for that. But it would be a painful and bitter 15 years of the kind that we hoped was behind us. Over the past 15 years, we have already lost three times the number of steel jobs that remain. The case for a comprehensive redevelopment programme for Lanarkshire is there already.

No steel workers, certainly not the steel workers at Ravenscraig and Dalzell, see themselves as working in a national symbol, still less an industrial museum. They see themselves as producing efficiently a useful commodity for a fair wage. They would not be there if their work was not economic and commercially viable. They do not need to be told that it is the economic and commercial case that has to be argued.

It is not my intention to apportion blame. It is my duty to ask what can sensibly be done, and to call for it to be done. The Secretary of State has said British Steel has not provided any details as to why it believes that the closure of the hot strip mill is necessary. That is true. But the underlying strategy of British Steel has been clear since the closure of the cold strip mill at Gartcosh. Although it is public information, neither the privatisation prospectus of British Steel nor any of the stockbrokers' circulars gave the capacities of the different stages of steel production in each of the major works. It was left to the Arthur Young report, commissioned by Motherwell district council, to spell out the underlying strategy of British Steel, which would be carried to its logical conclusion if British Steel was constituted as a private monopoly producer, with its monopoly power in the United Kingdom strengthened by the higher transport costs from elsewhere in the European Community.

In strip products, the bottleneck lay in continuous casting at Port Talbot and Llanwern. Ravenscraig pioneered continuous casting in British Steel flat products, and long ago achieved 100 per cent. continuous casting. The commissioning of the continuous casting extensions at Port Talbot planned for early in 1991 would mean that

[Dr. Jeremy Bray]

British Steel could then attain its peak 1989 levels of output without Ravenscraig. Now, with British Steel's announcement of the further continuous casting at Llanwern, all three strip mills will have 100 per cent. continuous casting by 1993, putting the final question mark over Ravenscraig.

In the current review of plate strategy, the lowest cost solution would be the redevelopment of the Dalzell heavy plate mill. Scunthorpe knows that it is not capable of rolling greater thicknesses of steel. But that deal option would be ruled out if Dalzell could not rely on a continuing supply of slabs from Ravenscraig. The prior announcement of the run-down at Ravenscraig appears to be a move to pre-empt the decision on plate strategy. In fact, the decisions are interdependent. The reality is probably that British Steel is putting them to its board separately to ease their acceptance.

In 1989, British Steel worked flat out, yet there was a record £20 billion deficit in Britain's balance of payments. Since then, the prospect for final demand for steel in the United Kingdom has increased with the expansion plans of our depleted motor industry, promising the biggest increase in vehicle production of any country in the Community. The European Commission has concluded that it is possible for steel plants to operate at lower levels of average capacity than previously assumed. The idea that "it is possible to maintain steadier" demand by restricting capacity does not work, since customers lost at the peak do not return at the trough, and suppliers abandoned at the trough will not oblige by supplying at the peak.

The first question, therefore, is whether 1989 steel capacity to which British Steel proposes to restrict itself without Ravenscraig strip products is consistent with the restoration of economic growth and the balance of payments in the United Kingdom.

The smaller vessels and specialised plant at Ravenscraig have enabled it to produce difficult-to-roll products like electrical steels which have not been economic at Port Talbot and Llanwern. It is widely expected that if British Steel acquires Klockner in Germany, it will source such special steels from there, and cease its production in the United Kingdom. The second question is therefore whether the restriction in product range without Ravenscraig will further weaken Britain's competitive position.

Both those questions will have been considered by British Steel. If its decision is to be questioned on the ground of competition policy which the present Government and all Governments must have, as a monopolistic or restrictive practice, the mechanism for doing so is the Office of Fair Trading and the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in the United Kingdom, and the European Commission. The formal and informal review would almost inevitably have both a United Kingdom and a European dimension. But, as most Ravenscraig products come under the treaty of Paris, the primary formal responsibility for competition policy in this case would probably lie with the European Commission. The European Commission regulatory regime has certainly been moving away from restricting competition and capacity to expanding it, as with the planned ending of voluntary restraint agreements on imports of steel by 1992, but it would be expecting too much to rely solely on that approach.

The third question is technology. The continuous casting of 9 to 12in thick slabs, now operating at Ravenscraig and still being extended at Port Talbot and Llanwern, is an obsolescent technology. The new technology is thin-slab casting, with continuously cast slabs 2in thick going straight into a slimmed-down hot mill, and coming out as hot rolled coil only 0·1in thick, with little work for a slimmed-down cold mill to do to reduce the coil to a typical 0·04in thick cold rolled strip of the kind used for car bodies. Furthermore, the strip is superior, very fine grain steel, as a result of the more rapid cooling than is found in the present thick-slab technology. The mills are smaller, but considerably more sophisticated than conventional hot and cold mills.

The pioneering thin-slab caster is now being run in by the Nucor Corporation at Crawfordsville, Indiana. An informative article on it appears in the current May edition of *Metal Bulletin Monthly*, the leading international journal of the steel industry. The expected cost reduction over thick-slab steel is a decisive $50 to $75 per ton, and energy savings are substantial. The Nucor plant uses electric arc steel, which limits the purity of the steel to that of the scrap used. But the process is operable on basic oxygen steel in an integrated steel works, though its introduction will require a serious but manageable development effort. Sooner or later, integrated steel works will have to come to grips with this new technology.

Ravenscraig is well suited to be the pioneer plant for the introduction of the technology to integrated steel making because it is large enough to introduce an effectively new strip product to world markets, while its relatively small vessel size and the need to upgrade and replace the present finishing end make it suitable as a development plant. There are certain aspects in which it looks as if Ravenscraig's continuous casting experience could already improve on Nucor practice. The development would be complementary to the investment planned at Port Talbot and Llanwern.

The Government should offer British Steel this option for Ravenscraig, as a pioneering development plant, in addition to its present roles, essential in any production complex, as the swing plant and the maker of special products. It is not a soft option.

While the Economic Community state aids code bans subsidies, it allows support for investment involving research and development, which would certainly be the case here. Other European countries support civil industrial research to a greater extent than we do, and the record shows they benefit commercially. It is fully economic for Governments and the European Community to enable private firms to go beyond the short term and conservative practices which so many firms believe their shareholders require of them. There is no reason why such a development at Ravenscraig should not be a joint venture between British Steel and other European, American or Japanese companies. All face the same problem of introducing this important new technology.

There is much technical and commercial investigation to be done before such decision can be made. The Government should seek the full participation of British Steel, which I believe would be forthcoming. I have a letter from Mr. Martin Llowarch, chief executive of British Steel, confirming that thin-slab casting will have a major

effect on strip products. If I am wrong, and British Steel will not co-operate, the Government should go ahead with other steel companies. It would be best if the necessary investigations were started by this Government, but against the timetable which British Steel has set out, it would not be too late to initiate such a development after the election.

This is not the first time that I have suggested a major development project to a private British steel company. Nearly 25 years ago I suggested to the Steel Company of Wales—before nationalisation—that it should develop the world's first adaptive computer control system for its cold mill. A young engineer whose first job in the steel industry was on that project is now the works director at Shotton.

I speak as the Member privileged to represent the constituency that contains Ravenscraig, but as Opposition spokesman on science and technology I believe that this is the kind of industrial development project which any Government should be prepared to back after full investigation. I would say to my constituents that we have learned not to trust people who offer us guarantees in a world where we are accustomed to having to win the hard way, but I firmly believe that this readiness to embrace the future is the best route for us to pursue.

British Steel has a task of human and not merely financial reconstruction—I am thinking not of social obligations, but of the morale, capability and enterprise of the people whom British Steel will need to employ in the future. They will wish to respond to the kind of challenge that I propose, and I believe that they will.

4.46 pm

Mr. Allan Stewart (Eastwood): I am sure that I speak for all hon. Members in welcoming back to the House the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) after his recent operation. As always, the House listened intently to him because he speaks with an unrivalled personal knowledge of the industry and was most constructive. We all extend to him our best wishes for a steady, continuing and full recovery.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) referred to some of the reports about Ravenscraig in the English press. I was surprised by the tone of some of those comments, about which it is worth saying two things. First, no one has been calling for a subsidy, as was alleged. The hon. Member for Garscadden did not call for a subsidy—I do not know what he was calling for, but I shall leave that aside for the moment. There is simply no question of the Scottish interest, or of Scottish steel workers, Scottish Members of Parliament or the Government seeking a subsidy. Secondly, the reports seemed to suggest that the position taken by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland was unexpected, unusual or incompatible with the principles that the Government have adopted in their approach to industry. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Government have rightly rejected old-style interventionism, which has had such disastrous consequences for many parts of Scotland as for other parts of the United Kingdom. However, to reject interventionism is not to argue that when major decisions such as the one we are considering have been announced industry and Government are inhabiting wholly different worlds. That is an absurd proposition.

That is as true of the Department of Trade and Industry as it is of the Scottish Office. One of the Sunday newspapers rightly referred to the limousines of the captains of industry queueing up at 1 Victoria street—the headquarters of the DTI—and commented, "They must be talking to somebody."

Yes, management must manage, but to accept that proposition is not in any sense to accept that there is some law of management infallibility. My right hon. and learned Friend rightly said that in 1987 British Steel nearly closed the strip mill at Ravenscraig. That was followed by three years of record production.

Let me give another constituency example. Hon. Members will recall the campaign about the Armitage Shanks tubal works in Barrhead. On that occasion, my hon. Friend the Minister of State asked the holding company to defer the redundancies to allow a full study of constructive alternatives to take place. That position was fully and publicly endorsed by the Prime Minister. My right hon. and learned Friend's position is perfectly correct, and it is wrong to suggest that he has taken a unique stance that is incompatible with previous Government decisions.

If British Steel is to be persuaded to change its mind, two things must happen. First, there must be a united and sensible response from all concerned. Partisan points have been made in the debate—it would be surprising if they had not—but, broadly speaking, Scotland has so far given a united response to the announcement. Secondly, as my right hon. and learned Friend rightly said, British Steel will be persuaded to change its position only by commercial facts and figures, and perhaps by the constructive suggestions made this afternoon by the hon. Member for Motherwell, South. It will not be persuaded by ranting and raving—however satisfying such activity may be to hon. Members.

During the past few days, some Opposition Members seem to have been obsessed with studying every statement made by every Minister or spokesman to see whether minute observation can detect textual or syntactical differences between what was said on different occasions. They remind me of the mediaeval scholastics who spent so many years arguing about how many angels could dance on the head of a pin: their activity is about as useful.

I do not wish to stir up passions in other parts of the United Kingdom by making remarks about the Welsh, but for a long time there has been a suspicion that the decisions of the senior management of the company—now and before it was privatised—have been biased in favour of south Wales and against Ravenscraig. That may or may not be correct, but the feeling exists regardless. That is why I argued—as did the hon. Member for Motherwell, South, with greater expertise—for the break-up of British Steel on privatisation, and why I support the early-day motion tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker).

Of course the Secretary of State was right to say that we must not take our eye off the ball, and that our priority must be to put forward a rational case to encourage British Steel to change its position. He was also right to announce today contingency plans for the regeneration of Lanarkshire in the regrettable event of the decision going ahead. I was astonished that Opposition Members jeered that decision. Do they not want contingency plans? Do they think that there is an absolute guarantee that the decision can be reversed? There is no such guarantee.

[Mr. Allan Stewart]

We must face up to the possibility that a decision may already have been made to close Ravenscraig in the long term. Although I have no knowledge that it has been, we must recognise that it is a possibility.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): If the Secretary of State's initiative goes ahead—whether or not the strip mill closes—it is likely to produce enormous benefits for Lanarkshire with the introduction of new industry.

Mr. Stewart: My hon. and learned Friend is absolutely right. It does no one any good for Opposition Members to deride the efforts made throughout Scotland, by people of all political persuasions, to regenerate areas that have faced major closures. If the decision has been made, the sooner British Steel fulfils its obligations to offer Ravenscraig for sale—if it has no further use for it—the better. However, that is not, and cannot be, the priority for the moment. It is better for that possibility to be faced in a year's time than in 1994, when I suspect there will be no possibility of a buyer coming forward with sensible proposals.

The entire House will agree that the trade unions have reacted with determination, and also with great common sense. They have the right to expect the House to act with the same common sense.

4.56 pm

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): It is a testimony to the eloquence of my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) that there are few speeches that are worth getting out of a sick bed and coming to the House to hear.

The Secretary of State for Scotland referred to passion, anger and emotion. It is inevitable that there will be some of that today, partly because of the importance of the Ravenscraig plant to the entire Scottish economy, partly because of the pride in the efforts of the Ravenscraig work force that has existed for many years—a professional pride shared by a cross-section of Scottish opinion, regardless of political persuasion—and partly because survival has never been easy for Ravenscraig or its work force, but has had to be fought for and won, sometimes at an immense price in terms of self-sacrifice and effort. However, there would be no identification, interest or attachment on the part of people throughout Scotland—highland crofters, border farmers, manual workers and professionals from the lowlands and the west of Scotland—without that passion. There is emotion too: no group of men and women have fought for so long with such vigour, dignity and sheer common sense as the Ravenscraig work force.

When the Secretary of State warns us against emotion, I hope that he realises that it is not always negative emotion. I make no apology for not adopting the clinical approach of the mercenary advocate on behalf of Ravenscraig. However, both he and my good friend Tommy Brennan will be pleased to know that, although passion and emotion will be involved, they will not be the substance of our argument this afternoon. That would be to demean the efforts of the work force, who would be the last to indulge in sentimentality or to seek charity. The Secretary of State knows that, as he met them this morning. He must also know that, contrary to the poisoned opinions of some London leader-writers for whom Motherwell appears to be a faraway town—a town about which they care little and obviously know even less—the case for Ravenscraig has never been based on sentimentality. It has been based on an appreciation of hard facts of commercial and industrial importance—facts relating to industrial productivity and industrial performance as a whole. My hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South outlined in far greater detail than any other hon. Member could the economic and industrial alternatives that may be considered. In view of some of the myths, inaccuracies and half-truths that have been stated, I shall reassert several simple facts.

First, last week the chairman of British Steel did not announce merely the closure of the hot strip mill; implicit in every detail was the closure of the whole Ravenscraig plant. That announcement was predictable and, indeed, predicted not only by my hon. Friend and me, but in the Arthur Young report which was commissioned by Motherwell district council, was widely available and was ridiculed by Ministers in 1987-88. Although the closure may have been predictable, it was not inevitable. It could have been avoided if the Government had heeded the warnings before and during privatisation.

I do not wish to spend time on recriminations. I mention that fact only because British Steel's so-called guarantees in December 1987, as I said at the time, were more a timetable for the execution of the plant than anything else. It is clear from the announcement of the closure of the hot strip mill that it is a timetable to which the chairman of British Steel is keeping exactly. It implies the closure of the whole plant in 1993-94. That is what we are fighting against today. We are fighting not only for the 1,000 jobs directly or indirectly related to the hot strip mill, but for the 2,500 employees over and above those to whom Bob Scholey gave notice last Wednesday. If Bob Scholey wins his case, we will also be fighting for the Dalzell plate mill. Nobody who knows anything about steel believes that he will leave Clydesdale tube works on its own, 400 miles from the rest of British Steel's operations. Therefore, let us be clear about the importance of the announcement about the hot strip mill. If Bob Scholey wishes to blow the Scottish steel industry to bits, the Ravenscraig hot strip mill is the trigger that he is using.

Secondly—this has been covered in a dispute, more academic than real, between the Secretary of State and me—the Ravenscraig plant is crucial not only for Lanarkshire, but for Scotland in terms of freight, transport industries, road and rail, the Clyde port authority, electricity and fuel. Thirdly, the hot strip mill is not a dispensable luxury to either the Ravenscraig plant or British Steel. For the past three years it has been working to capacity and, as the Secretary of State said, producing steel of high quality. It is important to remember that it has overcome the tremendous difficulties of producing high-quality steel, which cannot easily be replaced by alternative production in high-volume plants within British Steel. Until last Wednesday, the mill was commercially viable and in the absense of detailed information to the contrary it must continue to be considered commercially viable.

Fourthly, Ravenscraig is not only commercially viable, but one of the most productive plants in Europe. The Japanese and many others use it as a measure of productivity and a yardstick for economic efficiency man hours per tonne. At Ravenscraig workers are producing

and operating on a figure of 2·33 man hours per tonne. That is the best and most efficient figure not only in British Steel and the United Kingdom, but in the whole of Europe. Every productivity record at Ravenscraig has been broken and every target set by the management attained. The workers at Ravenscraig have not been given the right to continue by Sir Robert Scholey; they have earned it.

Fifthly, all that has been achieved despite immense obstacles placed before the work force in terms of inadequate investment, unfair preferential loading, intermittent production pauses and, always, the morale-sapping suspicion that, whatever the effort and results, they will remain on Black Bob's blacklist for eventual closure. Let me make it clear that neither I nor anyone else in any way associated with Ravenscraig resents investment in other plants. That investment is the instrument of security for thousands of dedicated workers. We are saying that the same long-term security has been earned by the work force in the Motherwell plant.

Sixthly, if British Steel management has been wrong —the Secretary of State intimated that—at times it has been infamously wrong in its forecasts of future demands. That is why the research undertaken at the behest of Motherwell district council may prove invaluable to our cause. I do not say that British Steel has been alone in its forecasting errors, but forecasting is a vital element in the present decision. There is a strong case for arguing that there is no over-capacity within British Steel and, indeed, that the so-called over-capacity has been built in to justify the closure. Hon. Members may ask why. Surely it is not merely because of the prejudices of the chairman of a large corporation. Let none of us forget that British Steel is a monopoly producer. It was privatised as a monopoly, despite the arguments of Labour and Conservative Members. The reduction in capacity within British Steel can be viewed as reasonably as a measure for price increasing as for cost cutting. For that reason, I commend to the Secretary of State the suggestion of Mr. Hamish Morrison of the Scottish Council (Development and Industry) that a reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission should be seriously considered, lest British Steel is allowed the freedom to abuse its monopoly to the detriment of all its United Kingdom consumers. Alternatively, the matter should be referred to the European Commission, as my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South suggested.

There is every indication of a strengthening of demand for strip steel products. The North sea oil industry is undergoing the first stages of a new revolution. Every indicator suggests that the car industry stands on the brink of a new upsurge. The deterioration in condition and decrease in numbers of our merchant fleet demands urgent attention. I name but three areas of potential expansion. Given those signs, the price increase incentive to British Steel and its history of forecasting, it would be a rash man indeed who would be prepared to take at face value the assurances of the chairman of British Steel.

Finally, the steelworks and strip mill are particularly well placed to provide the products for expected future demand. As I said earlier, it has been an ironic quirk of what some consider to be the unfair development plan à propos Ravenscraig that it has become the plant that produces high-quality, difficult-to-make steels. If the hot strip mill goes, it is extremely doubtful whether steels of such difficulty and quality can be produced by any other high-volume plant within the present corporation. That would be a loss not only to Motherwell and Scotland, but to British Steel and our balance of payments.

The Secretary of State asked what could be done. There are options open to the Government and to Ravenscraig. Hon. Members have mentioned restrictive or monopolistic practices and the possibility of a reference to the Office of Fair Trading, the MMC and the European Commission. There are avenues which the Government could consider. My hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South outlined Ravenscraig's capacity to produce high-quality steels, the need for research and development, the demands of developing technology and the future appropriateness of Ravenscraig for thin-slab casting.

An independent Scottish steel industry has been mentioned and, although I do not underestimate the problems in terms of capital input, the finishing side at Ravenscraig and difficulties with Clydesdale, it is an option. The Secretary of State and his colleagues have mentioned an enforced sell-off. All such options would be closed to Ravenscraig if British Steel were allowed to close and remove the hot strip mill from the site. That is why I unashamedly believe that the maximum political unity on this issue is not only appropriate, but essential. I commend that approach to everyone in the House. In case my argument is viewed with suspicion by some, I also commend to them the editorial in this morning's edition of the *Daily Record* which has, as so often in the past, its finger on the pulse of Scotland.

Our motion has not been framed to suggest that we have no criticisms of the Government. We have worries and they were heightened by the announcement today of the meeting held on 3 May—the first time it has been mentioned by the Secretary of State. However, because our overriding priority is to achieve the greatest possible consensus in defence of the Ravenscraig plant, the issue is not and should not be a matter of personal reputation, party advantage or personal advance. We will never be forgiven if we make it so. That does not mean that we should forgo an examination of all the available options, but it means having the maturity and wisdom to realise that if we cannot speak with one voice in opposition to the British Steel decision, none of the possible options has a likely future.

I am disappointed by the Government's response today. Our motion intentionally avoids criticism of their previous stand. It is liberal, some would say too liberal, in omitting to mention what some consider as previous errors on the part of the Government. It is almost word for word, as was previously mentioned, the motion that Scottish Conservative Back-Benchers rushed to sign in their zeal to be identified with Ravenscraig's case less than a week ago. The Government, however, have found themselves unable to support the sentiments expressed in the motion. People outside will ask why. Are we to believe that the Government, who found British Steel's decision deplorable last week, now find it less so five days later?

Mr. Rifkind *indicated dissent.*

Dr. Reid: I am glad to note that the decision is still regarded as deplorable. Are we to understand that the call from Conservative Back-Benchers to reverse the decision last Wednesday has become one to acquiesce to it? That is what their refusal to support our motion in the Lobby tonight will mean.

[Dr. Reid]

What are we to make of the Government's amendment? We have all heard of the importance of the three Rs, and today we have seen the confusion between the two Rs—Rifkind and Ridley. One half of the amendment, presumably the Scottish Office half, invites British Steel to explain, presumably to its work force, the commercial grounds on which its decision was taken. That is fine as far as it goes, but the other half of the amendment negates that as it insists that the issue is the exclusive business of British Steel. That part obviously emanated from the Department of Trade and Industry, although its Secretary of State has not even bothered to turn up today or even to put his name to the amendment. Once again he is presumed dead, missing in inaction.

The one thing the Government amendment does is to distil the impression, unfortunately prevalent since the closure was announced, of confusion, division and vacillation in the Government. I take no satisfaction from saying that and I wish that that was not the perception gained. The position of the Secretary of State is unenvious. I have no reason to doubt his sincerity when he says that he deplores the British Steel decision—even if I did have reason, I would be inclined today to suppress my suspicions. However, I and others, including the people of Scotland, have every reason to doubt his assertion that he carries with him a Cabinet united in deploring the decision of British Steel and committed to reversing it. That doubt is a grave handicap in the battle to save the hot strip mill, but it is an even graver handicap for the Secretary of State. If the right hon. and learned Gentleman cannot command the support and confidence of his Cabinet colleagues in his fight for Ravenscraig, he will command it in precious little else of value to the people of Scotland.

This morning the right hon. and learned Gentleman met Tommy Brennan and, according to news reports, he assured him that he "wholeheartedly supported" the fight to save the strip mill and ultimately the Craig. Tonight the eyes of Scotland will be upon the right hon. and learned Gentleman and his colleagues. I hope that they do not fail to live up to the expectations created by the impression they have already given. If they do, they will be failing not only Tommy Brennan and the workers of Ravenscraig, but Scotland.

5.15 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I listened with great interest to the speeches of the hon. Members for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) and for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid). I agreed with much of the speech of the hon. Member for Motherwell, North, but I was saddened that, at the end, he made some narrow points. I was also saddened that, when the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) opened the debate, he did not give way to me on a fundamental and important part of the Opposition's motion, which calls on the Government "to do everything possible to reverse a closure".

All I wanted from the hon. Gentleman was an explanation of what he meant by "everything possible", as my interpretation of that phrase may be different. That is why I cannot support the Opposition's motion. Given the speeches of some Opposition Members, "everything possible" could mean the renationalisation of British Steel. It could mean anything, so I cannot support the motion. If the Opposition asked whether I supported the efforts to get British Steel to reconsider its decision, the answer would be yes. If the Opposition asked whether I believed that the Government should do everything they could within present legislation and the European Community, the answer would be yes.

The hon. Member for Motherwell, South is a remarkable and courageous man to come here so soon after his operation. I only hope that his constituents realise what he has done today. He made one of the best speeches that I have ever heard on the matter, which is a highly emotive and difficult one. He put across difficult technical points in a unique way. I have no knowledge of the steel industry, and it was interesting to listen to fundamental, important technical points being explained in a manner easily understood by those of us not technically qualified or experienced. I found his speech moving as well as easy to understand. The hon. Gentleman, perhaps more than anyone, deserves the Ravenscraig decision to be rethought.

I have no technical knowledge, but based on the information available to me, it is clear that, if the hot strip mill closes, it will inevitably lead to the rest of the British Steel plants in Scotland having a limited life. That is a realistic way in which to look at the situation—it is not an overstatement, nor am I being over-dramatic. One need only study the investment that has gone to south Wales for many years to realise that the steel industry is no different from any others. If such investment goes to one plant, one area or one sector, it is obvious that that one sector will be in a much stronger position in terms of competition and modernisation than the rest of the industry.

I commend to the House the attitude of the shop stewards and the work force. I have always said that Ravenscraig should be judged by its performance in the market place. Anyone who suggests that Tommy Brennan and the other shop stewards in the work force have not responded to all the challenges and tasks with which they have been faced would be distorting the truth. They have done far better than anything that they were asked to achieve. Hon. Members should be seen to support workers who behave in that way.

The future of Ravenscraig and the other Scottish steel plants must be decided by the marketplace. It must be determined by business men making tough, realistic commercial decisions. I take that view not just of Ravenscraig, but of any other operation in the marketplace. I repeat that I believe that the work force at Ravenscraig have earned the right to be treated properly by their employer.

How can British Steel ever hope to motivate its work force in the future if it is judged to have behaved badly or not given its work force the sort of information that any sensible, enlightened employer would give people when decisions affecting their future are being made? That was why I had no hesitation in signing the early-day motion tabled by the hon. Member for Motherwell, North. I believed that it was right to condemn British Steel for the way in which it carried out this exercise.

I have made it quite clear why I cannot support the motion in the name of the Labour party and its leader. I cannot support a motion that calls for "everything possible" to be done in terms that are understood by the Opposition. That was why I thought that the hon. Member for Garscadden, who did not allow me to intervene in his speech—[HON. MEMBERS: "Shame."] If hon. Members

believe what Tommy Brennan and others are asking for, there is no merit in trying to gain narrow political points in such a debate.

I have never made any secret of my views on the marketplace, privatisation and other matters. My condemnation of British Steel is for the way that it has treated the Ravenscraig work force. I shall not in any way withdraw that condemnation, because I believe that Tommy Brennan and his colleagues have earned the right to be treated properly. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State said, British Steel has once before reviewed a decision, so it is not unrealistic to think that it may do so again. It is also right that British Steel should be required to reconsider any of the needs the work force might have if the hot strip mill were to close. It is important that those 770 people should not be left with no future.

This debate is one of the most important that we have had for a long time on Scotland's future. There is much more to it than just the economic importance. If it were only the economic importance, we could use delightful figures to get round it. However, there is more to it than that. There is the lack of competition for British Steel in the United Kingdom and the need for greater competition. That is why British Steel must be asked now—we should not leave it—to tell us what it meant by its pledge.

Did British Steel mean it when it gave the undertaking that it would sell off its Scottish plants if it saw no future for them? If it meant that, the time to sell those plants is when they are going, profitable concerns and people in the marketplace are prepared to invest. The time to do so is not after a thousand cuts, when they have been made uneconomic and non-viable. That is why I believe that one pressure that the House should put upon British Steel today is to ask it what it means by that pledge. If it cannot convince the House, Tommy Brennan, others in the work force and the hon. Members for Motherwell, North and for Motherwell, South, with their detailed knowledge of the industry, that there is a future and it has investment programmes that secure a realistic future, we should send it a clear message: "Honour your pledge, put those plants on the market and let the marketplace decide the future." Let us have some real competition in the United Kingdom; then perhaps we shall hear British Steel singing a different tune.

5.25 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): I agree with the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) that this is a crucial debate. The small number of English Members present, some of whom wish to participate in the debate, will, I hope, listen to the wider thrust of the debate. I hope that they will recognise that we are talking not simply about the need to secure an important, continuing investment in the Scottish economy, but about the need to secure the continuing success of a whole industry that has been profitable, and a plant that has made a substantial contribution to the success of British Steel as an entity and deserves better treatment than it has received to date. It has been living with this threat for far too long.

The importance of Ravenscraig to the Scottish economy is not in dispute, at least not among Opposition Members. The Government got into slight difficulties when they argued that it was important to Lanarkshire, but not the whole Scottish economy. Steel is the underpinning of an industrial economy, and ripping steel out of the heart of the Scottish economy is effectively to abolish the platform on which it has been, and should be, built. It does so ironically at a time when the potential market for steel from Scotland is growing and is likely to grow in the coming years.

The hon. Members who were making sedentary comments about this factor have left, but it is invidious to suggest that it is all right to close down a steel mill because British Steel will be able to attract alternative employment into the district in a short time. We all know—it is especially true of central Scotland—that the trouble is that the jobs that come in to replace the jobs lost are in no way comparable in quality, earning power or the contribution that they make to the local economy. To talk simply in terms of numbers is wholly inappropriate.

More important, it must be made absolutely clear that the reason why this closure is so offensive and unjustified is the contribution that Ravenscraig has made to the return to profitability of the British steel industry. It is worth stating that that contribution was placed on record by none other than Sir Bob Scholey and Mr. Stewart, the head of the strip division, who made clear to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry on 21 July 1988 just what a constructive and positive role Ravenscraig played in the recovery.

In a moment of hot temper, Sir Robert Scholey revealed his prejudice against Ravenscraig, from which we are now suffering. He has never made any secret of the fact that he wanted to close Ravenscraig. It is unfortunate for him that Ravenscraig has proved profitable, productive and successful. To date, he has been unable to close it, because it has confounded all his prejudices against it.

In reply to a question from me on 21 July 1988, Mr. Stewart said:

> "Ravenscraig has made a very important contribution in the recovery, because of its modern equipment in the steel plant . . . currently the Ravenscraig steel works is making a substantial contribution, because of its modernity, and the Ravenscraig stip mill is loaded to 15 shifts".

Sir Robert Scholey said:

> "we have valuable assets in the Ravenscraig works for which we have an ongoing need . . . Ravenscraig is a great block: steel plant and mill."

Those were the words of Sir Robert Scholey, who is now so anxious to close Ravenscraig, yet they are evidence that it was a plant that was crucial to bringing British Steel to the level of profitability that it has now achieved.

The Liberal Democrats have consistently taken the view that, at the time of privatisation, a separate Scottish-based steel company should have been created. That would have secured the future of the Scottish steel industry; at least it should have, because it would have been done on a viable base. It would have created competition for steel within the United Kingdom and removed the tension in the industry between steel unions and between the interests of Scotland and of Wales. The work forces would have been working for separate companies with separate strategies, carving out separate niches for themselves in the marketplace.

It has been our contention that a degree of competition should be explored. It remains a matter of considerable puzzlement to me that Ministers do not seem to accept their responsibility to promote competition in the marketplace, which they are happy to lecture us about at other times. On 22 February, I asked the Prime Minister whether she accepted

[Mr. Malcolm Bruce]

"that, on the ground of competition alone, the time is right for British Steel's monopoly to be ended and for an independent steel industry to be established, based in Scotland? Would that not best serve the interests of competition and of the Scottish steel industry?"

The Prime Minister replied:

"The best guarantee of a successful steel industry has been privatisation . . . The chairman of British Steel has recently reaffirmed that. British Steel also gave the assurance that if it did not need Ravenscraig at some future date it would be prepared to sell it to another buyer. That assurance stands and I wish Ravenscraig well."—[*Official Report*, 22 February 1990; Vol. 167, c. 1062.]

The point at issue is that, if British Steel is allowed to close the hot strip mill—to follow the logic through—in due time there will be nothing left that anyone will want to buy. British Steel as a monopoly producer should not be able to determine what it sells, when it sells and on what terms and conditions it sells; the fact that it can shows a total failure of competition policy. So I welcome the intervention by Hamish Morrison of the Scottish Council (Development and Industry), suggesting that the matter should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. I shall certainly write to Gordon Borrie, Director General of Fair Trading, to suggest that he looks into that proposition.

As the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) has said, there is a clear possibility that British Steel is seeking to restrict capacity to force up prices—in simple terms, to abuse the monopoly position that privatisation has given it. And it is doing so at a time when the market potential is significantly greater.

It is absurd to believe that British Steel will willingly promote the establishment of a competitor. There is a legitimate role for Government intervention to establish such a competitor if that is the only way of securing the interests of the consumer as well as the strategic interests of the British economy. Some hon. Members from south of the border seem rather cavalier about this: the fact is that the element of the Scottish steel industry for which Ravenscraig is especially well equipped—the North sea oil industry—is on an upswing which is expected to continue for the next decade.

In those circumstances, the decision to close Ravenscraig and ultimately to phase out the whole plant is a decision to abandon that market to foreign competitors, at a time when we have a £20 billion balance of payments deficit. Should not the Government have a view on that? Should they be so sanguine about it?

It is not too facetious to suggest that the logic of the Government's position is that, if British Steel decided that it could not maximise its profitability using steel capacity in the United Kingdom and making its investment here, and decided instead to invest in Korea, presumably the British Government would allow that and take no steps to intervene apart perhaps from remonstrating with the company at a few ministerial meetings. Is there no industrial strategy, no commitment to ensure that there is a strategic bottom line for steel—the more so since we can produce it competitively and efficiently?

The Government, who believe in the marketplace, have already embarrassed themselves by privatising too many monopolies. They should show themselves willing to stand up and force those monopolies to face competition at home and abroad. That is a legitimate basis on which this Conservative Government could intervene within the terms of their own philosophy, and I challenge them to do so. They should also have a view about the strategic base of an industry that we cannot do without, such as steel. I should have thought that servicing the North sea oil industry, with its special steel requirements, was an area in which we should be involved.

Finally, the Government should recognise that they must show more concern about our balance of payments. British Steel should not be allowed to make a bad situation worse merely because that happens to suit its investment priorities and profitability requirements. Ultimately, an independent Scottish steel industry might be the best way forward, and it could be secured as long as British Steel was not left to monopolise the industry.

I welcome the fact that the Committee for the Defence of Scottish Steel has agreed that all options should be pursued and that it will be seeking to gather information that might help to bring about—or at least explore the possibility of—an independent Scottish steel industry. I too accept the need for all-party co-operation to stop this decision and to ensure that every option is explored so that, for the good of Britain and the British economy, the Scottish steel industry will continue to flourish and enjoy an investment base for a long time to come.

5.36 pm

Mr. Alick Buchanan-Smith (Kincardine and Deeside): I do not want to prolong the debate by reiterating what has already been said. I fully acknowledge the seriousness of the issue and I endorse everything that the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) has just said. We are not just considering the future of Ravenscraig; we are considering something much wider.

I am certainly one of those who believe that if Ravenscraig goes, the future of the Scottish steel industry will have an enormous question mark over it. The issue is even broader than that: I find it difficult to contemplate a modern industrial economy such as Scotland's without a stake in the steel industry. That longer-term element is important, quite apart from the immediate repercussions for those who live in the area and for the economy of Lanarkshire.

I appeal to my colleagues from south of the border. We are dealing with a problem much wider than the mere closure of a single plant. I beg my hon. Friends to understand and sympathise with this broader view. I am sure that if they lived in an area with an economy like that of Scotland they would share my concern.

Secondly, I reiterate what others have said: we must get at the facts, and I do not have confidence that British Steel will provide them unless we put on pressure. I point out to my hon. Friends from south of the border that that is the main point. If they have greater confidence in British Steel than I have, well and good. Let them put pressure on British Steel to provide the facts and show that our case is wrong.

When I was responsible for the offshore oil industry in the North sea I am sure that many hon. Members will acknowledge that I endeavoured to increase the opportunities for British industry, but one of my greatest disappointments was British Steel. Time after time, fabricators, engineering companies and others would tell me that they could not improve the British content of their projects because, for the basic steel content in the fabrication job, they could not get a bid from British Steel

or, if they got one, the quality or delivery dates were wrong. Often, therefore, steel came from as far away as Japan because British Steel did not take the commercial opportunities on its doorstep.

This is why my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State is absolutely right to pressurise British Steel on this. I have no confidence that it is not turning its back on a commercial opportunity. It is right that the whole House should be united against that, and I hope that my English colleagues will unite with us to ensure that British Steel produces the facts on Ravenscraig's commercial position.

It does not matter whether British Steel is nationalised or privatised, and I say that not wishing to widen the debate. One of the reasons given by British Steel for not being able to take advantage of opportunities in the North sea was that it was not given sufficient approval for the investment that was required to produce what was needed in the North sea. That is a criticism not only of my own Government but of previous Governments.

I had hoped that following privatisation there would be more investment and that more opportunity would be taken of what the market place had to offer. I totally support my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland when he says that we need to get at the commercial facts and that British Steel must justify its decision. Those are the overriding and fundamental objectives and I hope that everyone will unite to achieve those ends. As second best, I would support the proposition advanced by my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker). If British steel is not prepared to make a go of Ravenscraig and the Scottish steel industry it should step aside and give others the opportunity to do so.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North said, it is easy for a monopoly company such as British Steel to bring about death by a thousand cuts to this section of the steel industry in Scotland. It is easy to whittle down here and there until at the end of the day one is left with an industry that is clearly unviable and in which there may be no private commercial interest.

I accept that it is for British Steel to make the ultimate decision. If it persists in that decision I shall certainly look to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, to the Prime Minister and to their colleagues in Cabinet to put the strongest possible pressure on British Steel to ensure that a structurally viable steel business is put on the market for those who may be prepared to take advantage of the commercial opportunities which undoubtedly exist in Scotland.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I am listening carefully to the right hon. Gentleman's argument. I draw to the attention of the House that it was on the recommendation of the Office of Fair Trading in the not altogether different circumstances of the Atlas steel foundry in Armadale that, because of the actions of a large English company, the matter was referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. There have been two rather favourable judgments in the court of Lord Milligan. I raise those points in support of the right hon. Gentleman's arguments.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's intervention and I hope that appropriate note has been taken of it because it reinforces the case advanced by many of us in the House.

My last point is rather more difficult to make but it is as important as those that I have already made. It deals with the simple question of public responsibility. Some people have spoken as if a company such as British Steel or any large company has a responsibility only to its shareholders. That is not my view of morality in public life. People in business have a responsibility that goes wider than their responsibility to shareholders. First and foremost, they have a responsibility to the workers whom they employ. In this case British Steel should have taken those workers into its confidence and told them exactly what was happening.

I have been concerned with business of one sort or another, mostly small businesses, all my life. I do not know of any small business or business man whom I respect who does not consider in his decisions the community in which he lives. In the village where I was brought up there was a privately-owned paper mill which is, alas, now closed. In all the decisions taken by that paper mill there was some consideration of the effect on the community, on the workers and on the economy of the area. British Steel is in public life and has a moral responsibility to the community to explain what it is doing and to justify it. I do not say that just because British Steel was formerly nationalised because the same argument applies to all major companies such as IBM, Boots, and Glaxo. That responsibility must not be ducked, and so far British Steel has ducked it. I condemn it for that, but thank goodness my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has not ducked his responsibilities.

5.45pm

Mr. Thomas McAvoy (Glasgow, Rutherglen): There is a spirit of consensus in the House but I cannot go totally along with it because of some worrying aspects about the action or inaction of the Secretary of State for Scotland in this matter. In the seven months since last winter the Secretary of State failed to take up with British Steel that which he knew was coming and which he knew would affect Ravenscraig this year. He failed to take up with British Steel the importance of Ravenscraig to the Scottish and the British economy. In reply to a private notice question last week he failed adequately to answer why he had not done that.

Today the Secretary of State for Scotland told us that he had a meeting with British Steel on 3 May at which he made representations. The words used by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) last Thursday will be on the tombstone of the Secretary of State's political grave. My hon. Friend talked about the "missing weeks" and "dead days" during which the Secretary of State's inaction would perhaps be seen as having played a crucial role in the demise of Ravenscraig —if the closure goes ahead.

I listened with pleasure to the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith). His was the sort of speech that should have been made by the Secretary of State for Scotland because there is a role for morals in business and public life. I noticed some Conservative heads nodding during the right hon. Gentleman's speech.

[Mr. Thomas McAvoy]

I remind the Secretary of State for Scotland of some of his comments along those lines. At a meeting with union leaders on 31 November 1989 the Secretary of State said that he would not regard a routine drop in steel demand as excusing British Steel from its undertaking to him two years ago to keep Ravenscraig open until at least the mid-1990s. He said that he did not see privatisation as having altered his role "in any significant sense". The Secretary of State always had a role in seeing how British Steel operated in Scotland, and especially at Ravenscraig, and privatisation did not alter that role. However, he is now saying that the decision is totally commercial and that that is all there is to it.

He also said in his November meeting with union leaders that his responsibility for the Scottish economy gave him legitimate concern for the actions of major employers in Scotland. I certainly echo that statement because it echoes the speech by the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside. In *The Scotsman* of 30 November 1989—although *The Scotsman* says that it was on 31 November—the Secretary of State is reported to have said that the normal ups and downs of the market would not be seen by the Government as justifying closure. He said:

"It was well understood that by 'market conditions' nobody was talking about some dip in the market . . . The term was clearly meant to refer to some catastrophic fall in demand that could not be contemplated in other circumstances."

Where is the justification for British Steel's present stance?

Scottish Labour Members and the work force of British Steel feel that there is an investment bias against Ravenscraig. Hamish Morrison, chief executive of the Scottish Council (Development and Industry), said:

"A ten-year investment famine and the dismal failure to win a significant share of North sea business can give no confidence in a continuing commitment to Scotland by British Steel".

The Secretary of State has done nothing to counteract that bias against the Scottish steel industry.

In the past three to five years, the figures show a dramatic increase in steel imports, with a resulting impact on the balance of payments, on employment, and on the British steel industry. What have the Government done to balance that? The outlook for demand shows, particularly in the North sea sector, the possibility of a rise in demand for steel in the mid-1990s. British Steel may contradict that, but its forecasts have not been too accurate.

My hon. Friends the Members for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) and for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) have spoken of the direct effect that closure will have on employment in Lanarkshire. I represent Cambuslang, which has in it the Clydebridge steel plant, which is a sister to the Ravenscraig-Dalzell complex. Clydebridge takes the plate from Dalzell and performs specialised finishing treatment, including quenching and tempering, and is one of only two such facilities in Europe. The Clydebridge works are also unique in having a plasma arc cutter, which cuts the steel without changing its molecular structure and leaves it ready for welding. That is typical of the specialised skill in the Clydebridge plant.

Over the past 15 years, the Cambuslang area has had nothing but dramatic job losses. We have shared with the Glasgow, Shettleston constituency the effects of the closure of the Clyde ironworks and in Cambuslang itself the Hallside steelworks have closed. There have been dramatic reductions in the number of jobs available at Clydebridge itself, and only 150 people work there now. Only this year, the Redpath Dorman Long steel stockholders closed. I used to work in the Hoover factory, which 15 years ago employed 5,800 people, but now employs only 1,000. The Cambuslang area has been devastated. Although it is within the Glasgow boundaries, one feels that it is part of Lanarkshire. A number of its people are employed at Ravenscraig so there will be an effect on them quite apart from the direct consequences of closure on Cydebridge itself.

The right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside said that some English Conservative Back Benchers had spoken out against the closure of Ravenscraig. My hon. Friends the Members for Motherwell, North and for Motherwell, South have mentioned my next point, but perhaps it comes more forcibly from someone like me who sees the value of the British state, and who believes that it is unique, and should be kept because it serves the needs of the people. If the closure of Ravenscraig goes ahead, it will signal the beginning of a social move in Scotland away from the desire to remain part of the Union with England and Wales.

I firmly believe in the British state and will always work for it because I believe that we should reduce barriers, not build them. However, Conservative Members should have no illusions about the attitude of Scottish people if this goes ahead. It is up to the Secretary of State to show the Scottish people that there is something to be gained by being part of the Union. He must deliver this to the people of Scotland, not just the people of Ravenscraig, not as a totem and not as a symbol of industrial virility but as a sign that we have a Scottish steel industry as part of a modern industrial society. If he does not, Conservative Members who regard themselves as part of the Scottish Conservative and Unionist party will be shown by the pages of history that they have sown the seeds of disunity between Scotland and England.

5.55 pm

Sir Hal Miller (Bromsgrove): I am glad to follow the hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy) in expressing my conviction of the benefits of, and my adherence to, the Union, although I might differ from him on the extent to which the Government have delivered in support of that Union. Some of my hon. Friends might feel that we have delivered a great deal too much. However, I do not want to broaden our debate on Ravenscraig.

I should declare an interest as a consultant to the steel division of Glynwed Ltd., which conducts rolling operations. However, I have neither sought from the firm, nor has it given me, any information of relevance to the debate.

I want to explore the concept of a Scottish steel industry, as opposed to a United Kingdom steel industry. I have with me some rather interesting figures about the extent to which Scotland depends on metal manufacture and the metal goods industry, as compared with my region of the west midlands. Whereas 5 per cent. of employment in the west midlands, representing over 102,000 workers, is in metal goods, in Scotland the figures are 1 per cent. and 17,000 workers. In metal manufacture, the figures are 1·6 per cent. and 31,000 workers in the west midlands as opposed to 0·6 per cent. and 11,500 workers in Scotland.

When I add to those figures the fact that output at Ravenscraig is preponderantly directed outside Scotland, I find some difficulty in understanding the concept of a Scottish steel industry as opposed to a United Kingdom steel industry. I accept that steel is a basic industry, but we have a steel industry in the United Kingdom. It is being fortified and modernised, and I rejoice in that. However, I find it difficult to believe in the concept of a uniquely Scottish steel industry serving a Scottish market, in the light of those figures.

I understand that concept less when I reflect that there used to be a uniquely west midlands private steel industry, but it was put out of business when British Steel was subsidised, largely as a result of the Labour party's failure to close the so-called Beswick plants. It wanted to keep a larger capacity than the market could take and was prepared to subsidise ad infinitum. The only result was to put out of business the private steel plants in the west midlands, and eventually to bring British Steel almost to its knees.

I am no apologist for British Steel. I resigned my minor position over the issue of British Steel being subsidised to put private firms out of business. Loud have been my complaints that British Steel has been subsidised—to get more topical—to give unfair assistance to Sheffield Forgemasters as opposed to the private firm of Walter Somers. I am certainly no apologist for British Steel, but it is slightly unfair to continue describing the company as one that operates a monopoly when it has only 60 per cent. of the market.

I would not be adverse to British Steel being asked to put up its Scottish plant for sale, as suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), supported by my right hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith). That is a splendid idea. If a company wanted to take on that responsibility and felt that it could make better use of British Steel's assets, I would very much support such a development. Nevertheless, I return to the point that the outcome would still not constitute a Scottish steel industry. The operation may be located in Scotland, but certainly its market is not there, for the reasons that I have already given.

I am looking for a level playing field. We in the west midlands do not feel that we have been playing on one. All our expanding industries were directed or redirected to Scotland under the industrial development certificate policy, thus weakening the west midlands' industrial base, with no gain to Scotland.

Scotland still enjoys higher subsidies from central Government. If one examines regional assistance—[HON. MEMBERS: "Nothing to do with it."] Yes, I am going to talk about assistance per head of population. Last year, it totalled £30 per head in Scotland and only £5 per head in the west midlands, despite the fact that household incomes are £4,500 in Scotland compared with £4,000 in the west midlands.

The hon. Member for Rutherglen speaks about the Government delivering on the Union. They are delivering a higher subsidy to the Health Service in Scotland, making a much greater investment in its infrastructure, and providing a higher grant to local authorities in respect of the community charge. I am confident that the Government are more than delivering in maintaining the Union. I am only asking that there should be a more level playing field.

I see no point in trying to save Ravenscraig at the expense of another plant in the United Kingdom. There are no grounds for interfering with the commercial management decision that has been made, and there is no cause for different rules to apply in Scotland than in the rest of the Union.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I call Mr. Jim Sillars.

6.3 pm

Mr. Jim Sillars (Glasgow, Govan) *rose*——

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You would not expect me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to question the Chair's right to call speakers in whichever order it chooses. However, I shall be grateful for your assurance that you will bear in mind the specific constituency interests of right hon. and hon. Members, and the relationship between Gartcosh, which I represent, and the whole Ravenscraig scenario.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I shall certainly bear that and all other factors in mind when calling right hon. and hon. Members to speak.

Mr. Sillars: The hon. Member for Bromsgrove (Sir H. Miller) argued that if a country exports most of the products of its industry, it cannot claim ownership of that industry. If one follows the logic of that argument, it must be so that Saudi Arabia does not have an oil industry. Scotland has fishery, whisky and electronics industries, and the bulk of their products are exported. Nevertheless, they are extremely important in strategic terms to the Scottish economy.

Every time that the hon. Member for Bromsgrove rises to his feet in the House, or appears on radio or television, some right hon. and hon. Members welcome his intervention, because he clearly expresses the views that we have held for some time about the value of the so-called United Kingdom.

The view held by the Scottish nationalists, which is shared by the Liberal Democrats, is that we would prefer Scotland to have an independent steel industry. Not everyone here knows that in Scotland—but I exclude certain Conservative Members—the shop stewards in particular have it as a priority to seek to reverse British Steel's decision concerning Ravenscraig. Given the extreme importance of the debate, we bow to that decision on this occasion—always reserving the right to state our position when we consider that it is relevant and necessary to do so.

If I can get the attention of the Secretary of State and of the chairman of the Tory party in Scotland, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), I return to the point that I made in an earlier intervention about the need to establish a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs now, with the specific objective of investigating British Steel's decision—particularly given the invitation extended in the Government's amendment for British Steel

"to explain and defend its decision"

and to provide information.

The Secretary of State responded to my intervention with a cheap debating point. He said, quite fairly, that Donald Stewart and Gordon Wilson had refused to serve on a Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. I acknowledge that, and I personally, and my hon. Friend the Member for

[Mr. Sillars]

Moray (Mrs. Ewing), regret that they took that action, which we regard as being mistaken at that time. However, they would not have vetoed—nor would they have the power to veto—the setting up of a Scottish Select Committee, yet that is effectively what is being done by Conservative Members.

The Government amendment will be passed tonight because the English legions will be trooped in. The House will then be inviting British Steel——

Ms. Margerie Mowlam (Redcar): What a silly man.

Mr. Sillars: Does the hon. Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram) want to intervene?

Ms. Mowlam: No, it was me who was calling the hon. Gentleman a silly man.

Mr. Sillars: Does anyone else wish to intervene? Apparently remarks are being offered only from a sedentary position, so I shall continue.

The Government are asking the House to challenge British Steel to defend its position. To whom will it make that defence? The House does not have a suitable instrument of examination for investigating the company, and we cannot trust the Government. I quote from a letter dated 23 February sent to Iain Lawson by the Minister of State, Scottish Office:

"I welcome Sir Robert Scholey's recent confirmation that the statement which he made in December 1987 concerning the future of the Scottish plant"

which refers to his statement in the prospectus—

"still stands and that if there were to be any change in this position in the future, all those concerned would be properly consulted and notified."

Earlier this afternoon, the Secretary of State told the House that when he met Sir Robert he did not think that it would have been appropriate for Sir Robert to have told him about matters that the board was about to discuss. How can we trust the Government to engage in a proper examination of British Steel's defence even if it is prepared to advance a defence'

We require instead the resources and authority of a Select Committee, which can call on British Steel witnesses to come before it and be properly examined so that the full facts may be properly ventilated. Anyone who knows about the limited resources available to Opposition parties will be aware that a Select Committee is vital to ensure proper, genuine, detailed examination of what is claimed to be British Steel's position.

It worried me a little that the Secretary of State prayed in aid Tommy Brennan. I join the hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy) in not entirely going along with the consensus this afternoon. The Secretary of State claimed that Mr. Brennan told him this morning, "It's a commercial, not an emotional, issue." The right hon. and learned Gentleman implied in his interpretation of that remark that Tommy Brennan and the Ravenscraig workers are pushing aside all other considerations except British Steel's definition of what is commercial. I believe that the Secretary of State misinterpreted Tommy Brennan's remarks to him this morning.

I certainly cannot agree with the argument that the closure can be judged only on the commercial decisions as defined by British Steel. It will narrowly define what it regards as commercial criteria. I do not agree with the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), who says that the market should decide. Has he never heard of a rigged market, particularly for an organisation that has almost monopoly production? British Steel's long-term aim is to get rid of its Scottish operations and to utilise some assets by selling them second hand in parts of the international community, thus eliminating any possibility of competition from north of the border.

Mr. Bill Walker *rose*——

Mr. Sillars: I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman; he has intervened several times. We are talking about an organisation that can rig the market.

I was delighted to hear the speech made by the right hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Buchanan-Smith), who properly lectured the Government about community responsibility. Let us take the national interest into account and measure it against British Steel's narrow definition of what is commercial. Let us take the closure of Gartcosh, which it told us was commercially unviable because it was a long distance from markets in the United Kingdom. Gartcosh's production amounted to 500,000 tonnes a year. Last year, British Steel imported 10 times as much from places further from the United Kingdom market than Lanarkshire.

This afternoon, we are joining everyone in demanding a reversal. We should all acknowledge that we face formidable obstacles. British Steel is a private company. It can claim that in law, as distinct from morality, it is responsible only to its shareholders. It is a cash-rich private company. The WBS Phillips and Drew assessment says:

"The balance sheet is outstandingly strong with net cash of an estimated £180 million after allowing for the Walker acquisition plus investments worth considerably more than the £489 million book value."

There is no danger of British Steel having to approach the Government or another external organisation.

British Steel's market strategy has been clear from its investment strategy. In the current capital programme, not a brown penny has been earmarked for Scottish plants. Its biggest shareholders are impersonal institutions; 59·45 per cent. of its shares are held by nominees, the umbrella cover for institutional shareholders; 61 per cent. own over 1 million shares each. We are talking about people who are not terribly responsive to the arguments that we advance on behalf of the community. The Walker purchase gave British Steel the ability to buy in and fill gaps in the market if it makes a mistake in production.

I want to turn the attention of the House, particularly of Opposition Members, to the problem of the atmosphere in which British Steel will respond to our arguments. If Scholey, the board and its shareholders lived in Scotland there would be no problem in mobilising pressure against them. Every time they stepped out the house or the car, they would wince at the public agitation, but they live in an entirely different part of the United Kingdom. While many of us objected to the tone of the *Evening Standard* leader last week, it simply popularised what the *Financial Times*, *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Times* had been saying. We will be appealing to a hostile board, and probably hostile institutional shareholders, living in an atmosphere hostile to the Scottish people.

How do we achieve the mechanism necessary to start shifting the board of British Steel? It can be done only by political power that carries a real threat to British Steel. I

must confess that the role of the Labour party is absolutely crucial. British Steel is extremely nervous about a Labour Government. Page 43 of British Steel's prospectus says:

"The policies of opposition parties are the responsibility of the parties concerned. The Labour Party's 1987 manifesto set out the Party's policy for social ownership . . . Mr. Bryan Gould, Labour Party spokesman on Trade and Industry, stated during the Parliamentary passage of the British Steel Act 1988 that 'Opposition Members and the trade union movement strongly believe that the steel industry is most appropriately owned in a form of public ownership. We shall decide that form and the order of priorities by which it is to be secured when we return to power'".—[*Official Report* 23 February 1988; Vol. 128, c. 184.]

Labour Members tell us, and they may be right, that the Labour party will form the next Government after the next election, which could be next year.

Mr. Jimmy Dunnachie (Glasgow, Pollok): The hon. Gentleman was right the first time.

Mr. Sillars: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman said that.

Mr. Adam Ingram (East Kilbride): The hon. Gentleman wants the Tories to win.

Mr. Sillars: No. The hon. Gentleman is wrong about that. For a range of machiavellian reasons I would like to see a Labour Government, but we are seeking unity so we will set that aside.

Let us concentrate on the Labour party's claims and its motion before the House, which says that "everything possible" must be done. There could be an election at exactly the same time as British Steel is saying that it will close the hot strip mill at Ravenscraig. The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) said that the Labour party would give it the appropriate priority. Is not this an appropriate priority for public ownership? If British Steel rejects the good commercial case put by the shop stewards and the people of Scotland—it will do so only out of spite—and if the Labour party, whose policy review comes out on Thursday, said "Let British Steel be under no illusions. If it goes ahead with its plans to close the hot strip mill at Ravenscraig it will be taken into public ownership by a Labour Government when it is elected next year", that would have a dramatic impact on the board of British Steel. It is the socialist answer that the working people of Scotland expect in reply to the consequences of Thatcherism.

6.17 pm

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): I am delighted, as an Englishman with a steel works in his constituency, to be able to take part in this United Kingdom debate. I have been trying for the life of me to work out why so many Scots get themselves worked up into such a lather about this issue.

History shows that we are talking about a steel mill that is 27 years and 20 days old. It has not been going since Adam was a boy. The steelworks has been going since before the first world war, but the strip mill was introduced on 1 May 1963. It is not a longstanding mill about which passions will be roused because it has been in operation for a long time. It was constructed for the wrong reasons. It was brought in by Harold Macmillan's Government. They believed in the possible need for additional steel mill capacity. The experts said that there should be one new strip mill, in south Wales. The Macmillan Government decided to have two—one in south Wales and the other in Scotland, which was later named Ravenscraig—to provide employment.

That was not a commercial but an employment decision and it is on record:

"The main concern of the layman is where these plants are to be located. The decision of the Iron and Steel Board and the acceptance by the companies . . . was that it would be a good plan to have these two installations, both capable of considerable expansion. That has made it possible to make a solution which, while no doubt not acceptable to everybody, seems a fair and reasonable solution of the rather difficult location problem."

Ravenscraig was to produce 500,000 tonnes of steel——

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Nissan is in the hon. Gentleman's patch.

Mr. Holt: The Nissan plant represents diversification from the shipbuilding industry which is being replaced in the north-east of England. That good development is bringing many jobs to the area.

Harold Macmillan said:

"That was the point put to me by Scottish hon. Members and others who came to see me. All that is very much better than if we had located the whole plant in Wales."—[*Official Report*, 18 November 1958; Vol. 595, c. 1017-9.]

The Government, under the Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, and the President of the Board of Trade, Sir David Eccles, made those decisions to create employment.

What about Colvilles? Its forebodings in 1962 were correct. It was practically ruined because it had undertaken a project that it thought was unwise. Colvilles almost went into bankruptcy and had to be bailed out in that preliminary construction period before it made any money.

This all comes back to a commercial decision by the board of British Steel, which says, "This is the international and European market for steel." The board does not say that everything north of Hadrian's wall is inviolate and cannot be touched by the people who are charged with the responsibility for that industry. I am glad to see that the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) has come into the Chamber to hear me speak, because she was here for the rest of the debate. The redundancies in my area far exceed the 770 people who will be made redundant under the Ravenscraig proposals. People in my area have overcome that difficulty. There is a booming economy again on Teesside, brought about by the district council and other people. Just last week Derwentside council made an announcement about Consett, another strip mill which was closed with the loss of many jobs and without all the synthetic nonsense——

Ms. Mowlam: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Holt: I shall not give way because of the time.

Ms. Mowlam: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Holt: I shall not give way. If the hon. Lady had been here for the whole debate, as I have been, I should happily give way.

Ms. Mowlam: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have been in and out of the Chamber over the past hour and a half. The hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) did not have his glasses on, so he might not have seen me. I should like to set the record straight. If I

[Ms. Mowlam]

have not just been listening to the hon. Gentleman, I have nevertheless enjoyed contributions of a much higher calibre and quality than the one to which we are listening.

Mr. Holt: Over the past hour and a half, the hon. Lady has been out more than she has been in. That is obvious to anyone who has looked at the Chamber.

What is the debate about? It is about whether pressure should be brought to bear on the board of British Steel to change its mind about its decision. What will happen if the campaign is successful and British Steel has to change that decision? One of two things will happen: somewhere else will have to suffer—it could be my constituency and that of the hon. Member for Redcar—or we will be left with a lame dog board for British Steel. The board would never be able to make any decision because it would be afraid of a repetition of the hoo-hah by Scottish Members. We are over-represented by Scottish Members in this place. Any matter that relates to Scotland immediately results in the nonsense to which we listen in these debates.

Last week it was announced that there would be a modern, clean industrial and leisure development at Consett which will employ 1,300 people in jobs that are not related to the steel industry and are not historic but futuristic. We should look forward to such developments. *[Interruption.]* Some Labour Members are looking at the clock and saying that I should get on. I remind them that I sat here the other night through an entire debate on the development of the Clyde port in relation to Tees and Hartlepool harbours. One hon. Member spoke for an hour and five minutes and Conservative Members could not speak. I make no apology, therefore, for taking my full time in contributing. The more the Opposition shout and scream, the more likely it is that I shall continue.

It is interesting that no Labour Member from an English or Welsh constituency has spoken. By definition, such Members must have an interest in British Steel's future and the viability of jobs in their areas. This has been a narrow debate when we should have debated many more matters involving British Steel. Apart from one or two Opposition Members, I do not think that the Opposition have bothered to look at what there is at Ravenscraig. I know that the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) knows about it and I was pleased to hear him make a speech about the technical side.

The Opposition have criticised the board of British Steel left, right and centre, but the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars) let the cat out of the bag when he said that it was awash with cash and was profitable and well run. This profitable, well-run organisation cost the taxpayer millions of pounds a year at one time. It now wants to expand and diversify in Germany by buying German steel plants so that the industry operates in a wider European context. Yet they talk about a 27-year-old plant as though it was the heart and soul of Scotland. It is not; it is a steel works like any other which must stand or fall like any other. [HON. MEMBERS: "What about Scotland?"] The debate is about steel, not about Scotland. If we want a debate about Scotland, let us have a debate about Scotland's over-representation in this place. Scotland has far too many Members of Parliament for that country's population and English Members are forced, by definition, to represent a great many more people than their Scottish counterparts.

It is because I represent people who work in, and depend upon, steel works that I am pleased to have been able to contribute. It is a pity that no other hon. Member from a constituency south of the border with steel works located in it has taken the trouble to contribute. A great deal of the resentment that has been expressed is synthetic and much of what has been said is no more than political posturing. I do not believe for one moment that British Steel would in any circumstances be justified in changing the decision that it has properly made.

6.30 pm

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): In view of the priorities outlined by the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt), it does not surprise me that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) reminded me, 43,000 jobs on Teesside have been lost in the past 10 years. It should not surprise the hon. Gentleman that Opposition Members regard the decision as an extremely serious matter and an important event in the history of Scotland. The House should address itself once more to the serious problems that the people of Lanarkshire, and of Scotland more generally, face which they expect us, in turn, to face.

Earlier this afternoon I referred to the relevance of Gartcosh. It is appropriate to contrast the sacrifice of Gartcosh with the presence and excellent speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray), who personifies all that is best in Lanarkshire. His presence was a sign of the commitment that we have seen in the Lanarkshire steel industry—in Ravenscraig as well as Gartcosh—and the industry's achievements, which are there for all to see, should not be lightly dismissed. When the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs considered Gartcosh in 1985-86, most of us gave a warning that if, on the basis of commercial judgments such as those urged upon us in respect of Ravenscraig this afternoon, British Steel continued in its determination, it would weaken the prospects of Ravenscraig. Clearly that has happened. The decision need not and should not be fatal.

But even in the non-partisan spirit of this debate, I must tell the Secretary of State that it is not enough for him to tell us the limited amount that we have been told and to feel that, on the basis of his and his ministerial colleagues' records, they will not be called to account. We can fight, as we will fight, for a future for Ravenscraig and reserve the right to ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, who has not even bothered to be here this afternoon, the Prime Minister and the rest of the Government why the priorities of the men and women of Ravenscraig and their brave commitment to the industry have not been reflected in Government policy.

The Secretary of State told us a little more than we heard last week. He told us about the fateful meeting on local election day, 3 May. But what happened during the preceding months? Around Christmas time, some of us asked the Prime Minister and, a week later, the Secretary of State for Scotland, what the Government intended to do in view of the rumours that we were hearing. We asked whether the Government would use their influence. Even then, some of us pleaded with the Government to think about using their golden share, and we were told that the

Government could not use their golden share because they had placed restrictions on its use. The Secretary of State quoted Tommy Brennan, and Tommy knows that we support him and his first-class trade union colleagues to the hilt. But the Secretary of State cannot be selective. Tommy Brennan did not campaign for privatisation and, when privatisation was achieved, Tommy Brennan did not advocate that no recognition should be given to the Scottish factors. That was in contrast to what happened in the electricity industry.

Dr. Reid: Gartcosh?

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) rightly reminds us that he did not campaign for the closure of Gartcosh. The Government cannot merely go ahead with their policies and then say, "What a surprise; British Steel has told us that it is getting rid of the jobs because of commercial factors but it will not give us the reasons." I have to tell the Secretary of State that the whole thing comes as no surprise to me. There is no legislative obligation on British Steel, although it has a huge moral obligation—to which, so far, it has not responded.

I hoped that, despite the errors of the past, and although the Secretary of State seems forlorn, alone and unsupported by most of his Cabinet colleagues, the House will decide that there is a case for fighting for the Ravenscraig plant and the future of the industry because of considerations connected with productivity, economic strategy and the experience and achievements of the work force.

If that happens, we must begin by agreeing not to rewrite history. The hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) repeated an argument that we have seen advanced in the popular press, in England especially, which is no doubt inspired by Mr. Ingham and the advisers at No. 10. We are told that Harold Macmillan got it all wrong and that he is to be bad-mouthed. I do not recall as a youngster being a great fan of Harold Macmillan, but as a result of his decision hundreds of thousands of families in Lanarkshire and Llanwern achieved a measure of prosperity that this Government have failed to deliver. It is right that the wealth of a nation should be fairly shared throughout that nation and that productivity should be based on a sound economy in which the need for investment and a regional strategy is recognised. Harold Macmillan at least had the wisdom to see that. We need proper training opportunities to ensure that our young people in particular are given the right to work and the right to a future. Given the opportunities that we have been told are offered in Europe, why is the steel industry in Scotland and in other parts of Britain facing the problems of which we have heard this afternoon? The truth is that the Government's policies have created divisions.

Ravenscraig has shown a record commitment to production. I have heard no complaints this afternoon about profits, if they alone are to provide the motive. The work force at Ravenscraig has been shamefully abandoned because of the decision of a ruthless private monopoly. I am not in favour of giving a private or public monopoly that kind of power or influence over people's lives. There should be accountability. We should not leave those matters and the quality of people's lives to market forces alone. With proper investment and planning and a proper strategy for the steel industry, there is a future for Ravenscraig and for Scottish steel. I hope that the House will accept that view.

I do not believe that tonight's debate will be the end of the matter. In time, the Scottish and British people will decide. In time, they will reject influences which represent the arrogance of intellect and the brutality of power and which history will judge to our shame.

6.40 pm

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): I begin by paying a tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray). We all understand why he cannot be in the Chamber for the winding-up speeches. He made a brave and thoughtful speech which showed that he knows a great deal about the steel industry. His speech also showed the enormous strength of his commitment to his constituents, to the Ravenscraig steelworks and to the Scottish steel industry as a whole. The expertise of my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South has been recognised on the Opposition Benches for a long time. It is a pity that the Government failed to listen to him because if they had done so they would not be in this mess today.

My colleagues, including my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South, have spelt out a logical, economic and commercial case for the retention of the Ravenscraig strip mill. There have been no emotional appeals about unemployment and the social consequences for the Lanarkshire area. I live in Hamilton and I know what the economic and social consequences will be. None of my colleagues made that appeal. We have argued the economic and commercial case instead. Conservative Back-Benchers from Scotland also made a clear logical case. They argued strongly for the retention of the mill. It was regrettable that the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt), in his highly intemperate speech, attacked his hon. Friends as much as he was attacking my colleagues.

Over the weekend I read many press reports stating that the Secretary of State for Scotland was at one with his Cabinet colleagues on the issue. Having listened to the Secretary of State today and having read the amendment to our motion, I must agree with the reports. The Secretary of State has sold out to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Last week, with regard to the closure, the Secretary of State said:

> "I must make it clear that I deplored the decision and its implications for the work force. I am also very disturbed by the potential implications of closing the hot strip mill for the future of Ravenscraig as a whole . . . we shall seek to persuade British Steel to reconsider its proposal in the interests both of the company and of its work force."

In response to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), he said:

> "I agree with the hon. Gentleman about the desirability of doing that which can be done to reverse the decision."—[*Official Report*, 16 May 1990; Vol. 172, c. 887-88.]

The Government's amendment to our motion does not contain those sentiments. It contains no reference to persuading the company to change its mind. The amendment contains no reference to the Government doing everything that they can to reverse the decision. The only thing that the amendment invites British Steel to do is

> "to explain and defend its decision;"

[Mr. John Maxton]

It does nothing more than that. The only reference to "deplores" is in connection with

"any attempt to extract political capital from this event".

I agree with the Secretary of State about that. The only person who has been trying to extract political capital from the proposal is the Secretary of State for Scotland. He has been playing both ends against the middle. He is trying to appear as the saviour of the Scottish steel industry while in Cabinet he caves in. He is trying to be everything to everybody and he fails to be anything to anyone.

The Secretary of State asked whether we should allow decisions to be taken on the commercial judgment of British Steel. I do not disagree with that. But that is not the only criterion that we should consider. We should also consider the economic and social consequences of the closure. However, let us consider the commercial aspect. Ravenscraig is profitable and its productivity is high. It continues to break its own records and the plant is at least as good as any in Europe. The work force is superb and its products are an essential part at present of the British Steel range, as my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South explained. There is an increasing need for steel products in the United Kingdom for car production and for the North sea.

Given those commercial considerations, what considerations can British Steel place against them? If British Steel can put up commercial considerations against the case that we have made logically and sensibly today—a case that I hope the Secretary of State will put logically and sensibly to British Steel—and British Steel says that it does not accept our argument, what will the Secretary of State do about that? It was clear from the Secretary of State's speech today that he is going to do absolutely nothing.

Mr. Rifkind: What would the hon. Gentleman do?

Mr. Maxton: If the Secretary of State would for once take the debate seriously and listen, he might receive answers to his questions. He is the Secretary of State for Scotland. He is responsible and he has the power. He must use all his power and influence to stop the closure.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Maxton: It was the Secretary of State who privatised the industry and he refused to include the golden share that some of us proposed in Committee which would have stopped this exercise. The Secretary of State cannot escape his responsibility.

Does the Secretary of State have a series of meetings arranged with Bob Scholey to ensure that——

Mr. Riddick: Give way.

Mr. Maxton: I have no intention of giving way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Riddick *rose*——

Mr. Maxton: Mr. Deputy Speaker, will you throw the hon. Gentleman out if he cannot sit down?

Will the Secretary of State at least tell us whether he will have some meetings? Has he prepared a detailed case for Ravenscraig to put to British Steel? The Secretary of State has economic and financial leverage. Has it been made clear to British Steel that its actions are unacceptable to the Government? Will he take up the point made by Hamish Morrison? Will he refer British Steel to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission? Will he give whatever help he can within the terms of the European Community to assist British Steel, if it feels that it needs help over a short period to retain Ravenscraig? For example, will the Secretary of State take up the proposal on thin slab casting made by my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South? That was a clear and definite proposal which, if taken up, would require Government financing to fulfil it. Will the Secretary of State investigate that option?

If British Steel refuses to change its mind under all the pressure, will the Scottish Office finance a full examination of the future of steel in Britain and in Scotland? Will it insist that British Steel makes its Scottish plants available for sale immediately so that if there is a possibility of a Scottish—or another British—steel industry it must be available as a going concern, not as a rundown industry that no one would want. Will the Scottish Office finance a feasibility study on the Scottish steel industry? Will it work actively to form a consortium in Scotland to purchase and run Scottish plants if necessary?

Those are some practical questions, and the Minister of State has a responsibility to answer them. He is the last chance for the Secretary of State to have any of his credibility in Scotland restored. The Minister of State has a responsibility to tell the Scottish people what he will do to save the Scottish steel industry. If the Minister of State can give no answers to those questions, the people of Scotland will pass their judgment upon him.

6.50 pm

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Ian Lang): I echo the remarks of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) in welcoming the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) back to the House after his illness. His personal commitment to his constituents was well illustrated by his presence today. I am sure that the whole House will wish him a continued and complete recovery from his illness.

However, the hon. Member for Motherwell, South must have been disappointed by the tone and content of the debate. Apart from his informed contribution, to a large extent it was coloured by political point scoring and nit picking, which is not in the best interests of the Ravenscraig work force. There was a notable, lamentable absence of contributions from Opposition Members of any indication underneath their high-flown rhetoric of what specific steps the Labour party would take to change British Steel's attitude. Just what would the Opposition do?

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) asked about the golden share. He knows that that is not relevant to this issue. It carries no voting rights. Its purpose is to prevent a holding in the company from reaching 15 per cent. or more, and thus it is designed until 1993 to prevent hostile takeovers. The hon. Members for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) and for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) referred to competition and a possible reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

It is for anyone affected by or with an interest in this issue to raise the matter with the Director General of Fair Trading or with the European Community authorities as appropriate. I would not seek to dissuade anyone from

bringing it to the attention of the appropriate authorities. It is not a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State; it would be for the Director General of Fair Trading and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to determine.

I have no doubt at all that our general approach to industry is correct in creating an enterprise economy. We have seen that demonstrated in Scotland, where we now have higher manufacturing output and higher employment than ever before, even when manufacturing employment has risen in the past two years by 16,000, and that is on a broader-based and more diversified economy, with tens of thousands of jobs in new industries as a result of inward investment. But conditions change. We are right to press this matter with British Steel, because it was wrong before and it could be wrong again. Market conditions and operational conditions can change. We are right to test British Steel on this decision.

I inform my hon. Friends the Members for Bromsgrove (Sir H. Miller) and for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) and readers of the London *Evening Standard* that Scotland is a small country with a population of about one tenth that of England. Although steel is no longer vital to the Scottish economy, contributing only about 2·5 per cent. of manufacturing output, and although unemployment in Lanarkshire has almost halved in the past three years to stand at under 11 per cent. it would still have a big impact if all the remaining thousands of steel jobs in Lanarkshire were to disappear following the decision on 770 jobs now. I would not dissent from those who argue that that consequence could flow from this announcement. Of course, they would also take too many other jobs in other industries dependent on the steel industry. We have a duty to involve ourselves.

I am not proposing that we should take new powers or seek to inject cash into the industry, which would be in breach of the treaty of Paris, nor that we should change our policy. My right hon. and hon. Friends and I are strong supporters of privatisation. Indeed, I had the privilege of steering the steel and electricity legislation through their respective Committee stages. My right hon. and hon. Friends and I firmly support the hands-off approach of allowing industry to take decisions on commercial grounds. That approach is now transforming Scotland's economy.

Mr. Dewar: I have a one-line question for the Minister of State. He has not said what he will do to bring about what I understand to be the ministerial team's desired result, and that is a change of mind by British Steel. Will he now be explicit?

Mr. Lang: If the hon. Gentleman had not intervened, he would have found that he did not need to. I intend to refer to that matter.

When a decision to close a key industry, possibly leading to the disappearance of a whole industry in Scotland, without warning, consultation or adequate explanation takes place, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has a positive duty to involve himself. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has returned from the far east, where he has been seeking to persuade companies there in their commercial interest to locate in the United Kingdom. Some time ago his Department succeeded in persuading Nissan that it was in its commercial interest to locate in the north-east of England, assisted by about £125 million of regional assistance. I am delighted for the north-east of England that that success took place.

I advise my hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove that the regional assistance policy that so helped Nissan to locate in the north-east of England is the same regional assistance policy, subject to the same objective criteria, that applies throughout the United Kingdom.

Although I support market forces and a free market economy, I do not believe that that should be an excuse for an abrogation of duty or for total inertia. The Secretary of State has a duty to question, challenge, test, explore and probe a major industrial decision such as this. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland were right to speak out as they did last week.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): Will the Minister of State give way?

Mr. Lang: I shall not give way; I am short of time.

A range of commercial issues should be explored with the company. For example, we should probe the proposal to reduce capacity while, as the hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. McAvoy) pointed out, imports are rising, with all the implications that that has for the balance of payments.

There is the single plate mill strategy for Dalzell, on which a Glasgow university paper was prepared and submitted to British Steel and on which the Scottish Office's own paper has also been prepared and submitted. We should discuss with British Steel the implications for Ravenscraig as a whole, and the work that is being commissioned by Motherwell district council will also be valuable in making the case for investment and in considering the development of the steel-using infrastructure of the area. There is the possibility of a welded pipe mill, as proposed by the unions at Dalzell, which would also have the effect of reducing imports. There is also the possible disposal of Ravenscraig to another owner, on which we should press for detail and commitment and thus create the competition that is so dear to the heart of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Sillars).

At worst, we should seek a better explanation from British Steel of its reasons for closure—an explanation to us and to the work force at Ravenscraig. There is also the contingency work to which my right hon. and learned Friend referred on assistance for the area in the same way as assistance was brought to Merseyside, Sunderland and Inverclyde—including, one would hope, help from the British steel industry.

The motion shows little of the real will that is necessary to establish unity of purpose of the kind for which my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State called. It seems that Opposition Members have learnt nothing about the steel industry from the debacle of their 10 years of office in the 1970s. The motion calls on the Government to do "everything possible to reverse" the closure, but what on earth does that mean? The Opposition have had the opportunity, but they have not spelt that out in the debate.

Does it mean more cash from the taxpayer? In the decade from 1975, about £14,340 million at today's prices was put into the steel industry. In 1979-80, the taxpayer had to subsidise a loss of £1·8 billion—£5 million a day —and that did not secure efficiency. All it did was subsidise overmanning and inefficiency. BSC's output was at the

[Mr. Lang]

bottom of the league when we came to office. Anyway, a cash injection would be a breach of the treaty of Paris, and the Labour party knows it.

As the hon. Member for Govan and my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) asked, does it mean that the Opposition propose to bring back nationalisation under the guise of the weasel words of the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould)? Again, we waited in vain for an answer.

I remind the House that nationalisation ripped the heart out of the Scottish steel industry in the first place. It destroyed an independent, self-contained Scottish steel industry. It transferred control to London and turned the steel industry into an irreversible monopoly—so scrambled did its structure become that it could not be disentangled on privatisation. It left Scotland at the end of a branch line in each product division. That is what has led us to the parlous condition of that Scottish industry today. Nor did nationalisation save a single job. Under nationalised control, since 1974, 12,500 jobs were lost and 14 or 15 plants were closed in Scotland, several by Labour Governments, including steelmaking at Glengarnock.

Nationalisation would solve nothing and the Opposition have failed in their duty to spell out to the House whether that is the disastrous plan that they would now propose. Or do they plan some kind of updated yuppified nationalisation under the terms "social ownership" or "social control", taking powers to control, compel and direct, and grinding out enterprise in the way that so damaged the economy?

At the heart of the Labour party's rhetoric is a vacuum. The Opposition motion offers a blank page, with a blank cheque attached. That is insupportable to any responsible body or individual. What is needed is a realistic, responsible and positive approach, such as was offered this morning when my right hon. and learned Friend and I met the trade union shop stewards, and such as that taken at the weekend by the Committee for the Defence of the Steel Industry in Scotland and such as is embodied in the Government amendment.

We and they recognise that British Steel's decisions are and must continue to be for British Steel to take, based on its commercial judgment. There can be no question of a law-breaking subsidy or of seeking, beyond the powers that we have, to direct decisions. However, we have a duty to press British Steel to explain its reasons; to urge it to take its Scottish work force into its confidence and to give it the facts; to question its broader intention; and to challenge it to defend such an important and irreversible decision, with all that it could mean for the future of the Scottish steel industry.

It is in that spirit that I urge the House to reject the Opposition motion and support the Government amendment.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 177, Noes 301.

Division No. 217] **[7.01 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchan, Norman
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Haynes, Frank
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McLeish, Henry
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Quin, Ms Joyce
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*

Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ken Eastham and
Mr. Martyn Jones.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cartwright, John
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alastair Goodlad and
Mr. Tony Durant.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House recognises that British Steel's investment and operational decisions are a matter for the commercial judgement of the company; nevertheless expresses its concern about the potential employment consequences of the company's decision to close the hot strip mill at Ravenscraig; recognises the considerable productivity achievements of the Ravenscraig workforce; invites British Steel to explain and defend its decision; and deplores any attempt to extract political capital from this event rather than offering any constructive solutions.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

7.13 pm

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): I beg to move,

That this House condemns the mishandling by Her Majesty's Government of the outbreak of bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

This is an issue of great magnitude: potentially, it poses the greatest threat of the century to British agriculture. The possible implications of bovine spongiform encephalopathy—or mad cow disease, as it is known—threaten the existence of the entire British cattle herd. Moreover, these serious assertions ignore any possible risks—remote though they may be—of the disease being transmitted to humans. If that awful scenario were to develop, the legacy for which the Thatcher years would be remembered would not be the dismantling of the National Health Service, the privatisation of water or the destruction of our steel industry; the present Administration would be remembered simply for having permitted a new disease to emerge in the human race. However, I shall not develop that argument. I shall concentrate on the immediate issue: British cattle—alone in the world, I might add—have developed BSE, and I am sure that all hon. Members will agree that our first piority is to eradicate it as quickly as possible. The only people who can do that are the Government, but my confidence in their ability to do so wanes by the day.

Since first entering the House 20 years ago—along with the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—I have witnessed many examples of incoherent and confused action, but rarely have I witnessed such incompetence, vacillation and indecision as has been apparent in Ministers' handling of mad cow disease. When the Government have acted, it has usually been a case of "too little, too late". Even the Government's own expert adviser on BSE, Professor Southwood, has admitted that

"things could have been done a bit quicker",

and has observed that there is no doubt that it would have been better if we had acted a year earlier. Those are not my words, but those of the Government's independent adviser, whose opinion the Minister—rightly—highly respects.

Last week, the Minister's bizarre actions epitomised the Government's confusion. He showed all the signs of the vacillation and indecision that are his hallmark. I remind the House that this is the Minister who, ostensibly, was in charge at the time of Chernobyl and who delayed the imposing of restrictions for seven weeks. In those seven weeks, tens of thousands of lambs from areas contaminated with radioactivity entered the food chain.

The Minister spent the early part of last week showing all the signs of Corporal Jones disease—he stomped from one TV studio to another, as if auditioning for a part in a new production of "Dad's Army". All he seemed to be saying was "Don't panic, don't panic." The results were predictable. When he finally realised that, his expensive PR advisers calmed him down and he moved into the next phase of unsuccessfully trying to feed his young daughter hamburgers. I shall not develop that theme, but I counsel the Minister not to be so foolish in future.

I concede that this is a difficult issue, but I wish to analyse it coolly——

Mr. William Cash (Stafford) *rose——*

Mr. William Hague (Richmond, Yorks) *rose*——

Dr. Clark: I shall not give way at this stage.

Among the first questions that must be answered is why the disease arose, and why only in Britain. It is interesting that when Conservative Members find themselves on the rack, all that they can do is barrack and shout abuse.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): What would a Labour Government do about the crisis? Would they ban beef? Would the hon. Gentleman ban beef? What would he do if he were in my right hon. Friend's position?

Dr. Clark: That is a fair point. I give the hon. Gentleman a guarantee that I will enunciate the steps that we think should be taken——

Mr. Hind: It was a simple question.

Dr. Clark: If the hon. Gentleman is so ignorant that he cannot accept a courteous reply, and a promise from an hon. Member that he will deal with the point, he is beneath contempt. This is a serious problem and the Minister has not dealt with it as firmly as he should have done. I shall explain in words of one syllable, so that even the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) may understand.

The generally agreed presumption is that meat contaminated with scrapie was fed to cows that developed BSE by one means or another. I shall not go into the particular physiological process. The real question is: why did it happen in the United Kingdom? The key lies in the rendering industry. Before the 1979 general election the Labour Government became aware of the problem in rendering and published tighter draft regulations. That is in the public record. Unfortunately, the new Conservative Government, following their usual practice of rewarding their friends including those in the rendering industry, scrapped those regulations. The rendering industry honestly and unashamedly acknowledged the generosity. The chairman of the United Kingdom Renderers said:

"The original proposals were very expensive, but there was a distinct change of heart when the Conservatives came into office. They were happy to drop the idea of a code and settle for random testing."

Mr. Field, an executive member, went a stage further and, referring to the different technology permitted by the weakened regulations, said:

"This was partly as a result of changes in animal feed techniques but the basic motive was profit."

The Government's regulations allowed that. This Conservative Administration are directly responsible for the disease appearing in the United Kingdom.

Faced with a new problem, the Government, understandably, were bemused. For 18 months following the confirmation of the disease by their own vets, they did precisely nothing.

Mr. Tim Boswell (Daventry): No.

Dr. Clark: The hon. Gentleman scoffs. If he can tell me what the Government did in the first 18 months, I shall willingly concede the point.

Mr. Boswell: Does the hon. Gentleman recall that the diagnosis made by the Ministry vets was retrospective—re-examining the information on cases which had taken place over the preceding 18 months? That is how they knew about it.

Dr. Clark: The hon. Gentleman is right that in 1985 the disease was first discovered by a Kent vet and that in November 1986 it was finally confirmed by the Ministry's vets. In 1988 the Government wisely appointed a committee under Professor Southwood to look into the problem. It met on 20 June 1988 and acted with commendable speed. The gentlemen were well aware of the seriousness of the problem. The very next day they sent their recommendations to the Minister, but it was not until February 1989 that the Southwood report was published.

Professor Southwood claims that some of the crucial research suffered a delay of nine months. He specifically referred to the possibility of the disease passing from mother to calf, which is the critical factor. He said:

"We recommended that such an experiment be started almost as soon as we met, but it did not get under way until the report was published 9 months later."

Mr. Hague: Has the hon. Gentleman noted in the general conclusions of the report the words:

"We greatly welcome the speed with which the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has brought forward regulations based on the veterinary evidence and on our recommendations?"

Dr. Clark: Yes, I have read the report and I commend the hon. Gentleman on his assiduity in reading it. It may be that Professor Smallwood—*[Laughter.]* When I said "Small", I was thinking of some Tory Members. Professor Southwood's mind may not be like a stagnant pool; it may change. The hon. Gentleman rightly quoted Professor Southwood's words, but only yesterday he said the words that I have just quoted. Clearly, Professor Southwood, with the benefit of hindsight, has changed his mind and been honest enough to say so.

Professor Southwood had a difficult task. With the slashing cuts in research staff which the Government made —[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] Hon. Members may smirk, but thousands of research scientists in agriculture and food have been made redundant by the Government. The state veterinary service has 27 per cent. fewer vets today than when the Government took office. As a result there was a dearth of information and expertise. It is not surprising, therefore, that the conclusions in the report appear fragile today.

As the Minister repeatedly tells us, the Government's policy is based on Professor Southwood's theories, which must be seriously questioned. In essence, the Government's policy is simply that mad cow disease will in time go away. That is not a policy, but a hope and a prayer. The Government's policy is based on the premise that once the practice of feeding cattle the remains of other ruminants has been stopped and the lengthy incubation period expires, the disease will peter out. They even claim to know when that will be. They give a precise date of 1996. Some of us rather doubt that.

The Government seem to have underestimated the extent of the problem. They have nailed their colours to the Southwood figure that the number of BSE cases would be

"of the order of 350-400 per month."

That figure has been exceeded easily. For the past two months for which figures of confirmed cases are available, there were on average 900 a month. Clearly, the Government have got their figures wrong. In addition, the Government have accepted Southwood's argument that the cumulative total of mad cows would be between 17,000

[Dr. Clark]

and 20,000. That, too, must be seriously questioned because we already have reports of more than 13,000 confirmed cases.

The basic question mark in the Government's strategy is against the assumption that the disease is not transmissible from cow to calf. If that is found not to be correct, their whole strategy fails. There are no contingency plans whatever. Yet if we examine the case calmly, we find that the Government's logic is faulty. They argue that the disease cannot be transmitted to humans on the basis that scrapie has been known for more than 200 years and, as there has been no proven transmission from sheep to humans, it is unlikely that the disease will jump from cows to humans. I can understand the reasoning behind that and I sincerely hope that they are correct, as does every Labour Member, but they have been selective in their comparison with scrapie. They ignore the fact that scrapie has passed from sheep to lambs. If BSE is similar to scrapie, as the Minister argues, there must be a real possibility that BSE will be passed from cow to calf. If that is so, the Government's strategy is absolutely flawed.

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): The hon. Gentleman started by saying that the prime cause of the problem was alterations to the code of practice in the rendering industry. He will be aware that this is a complex scientific, biological matter and I hope that he will explain in detail exactly how those changes in the code of practice led to the present situation.

Dr. Clark: If the hon. Gentleman did not understand what I said I suggest that he reads the report of my speech because I do not want to detain the House at great length now. He rightly raised that issue in a previous debate when I dealt with it adequately.

Mr. Lord *rose* —

Dr. Clark: I will not give way as that is unfair to other Members who might want to speak.

Mr. Lord: It is absolutely crucial to the debate.

Dr. Clark: I shall not give way.

Mr. Lord *rose*—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) has already said that he will not give way.

Dr. Clark: It is interesting to note that once the argument gets going Conservative Members find it difficult and try to deflect it.

There is an increasing belief among veterinarians that BSE can be passed from cow to calf.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): What evidence?

Dr. Clark: The hon. Lady is a practising farmer, is knowledgeable and attends all the debates on agriculture. She has asked a pertinent question and I shall name some of the vets and other medical authorities to satisfy her.

The consultant virologist, Dr. Richard Tedder, at the Middlesex school of medicine, an excellent school, is reported to believe:

"It is reasonable to assume that BSE could be passed on"

from cow to calf. A similar view is held by Roger Eddy, former chairman of the British Veterinary Association's farm animal committee. He also said that trials would find that calves can pick up BSE from their mothers. He clearly asserts—I hope that the hon. Member for Lancaster is listening carefully—

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I am writing it down.

Dr. Clark: In that case I shall speak slowly. Roger Eddy asserts:

"My belief is that vertical transmission will occur."

Even the Government's chief veterinary officer, Keith Meldrum, distanced himself from the Minister when he said:

"It would not surprise me to find that maternal transmission did occur"

He has also taken a contrary view to the Minister about the dangers of the disease to human health:

"I cannot say that there is no risk to man from BSE. It is too early. We have only had this disease in the country for three years and the incubation period in man in cases of encephalopathies is very long indeed."

If the opinions of those vets are correct—they are just as much expert as other veterinarians—the Government's one-thread approach looks extremely flimsy. If that thread breaks we shall face calamitous consequences for the farmer and the consumer. It is not the fault of the farmers that we have BSE. They did not have any foodstuff that was labelled, nor did they provide the contaminated feedstuff.

If the disease spreads unchecked, we may eventually have to embark on a major eradication scheme that would decimate the British cattle herd. Farmers understand that. That scheme would cost taxpayers billions of pounds and lead to a shortage of beef with worsening effects on our balance of payments, which is already bad enough. Many British farmers would never recover. This is truly a case of being penny wise and pound foolish.

If the Government's strategy fails, we shall be forced to embark on an eradication scheme not only for the health of our herd, but for the simple reason that other countries will put British agriculture into quarantine. Already nearly the entire world will not allow the import of British cattle. The European Community has gone further by banning all calves from BSE cows. Our European partners are not prepared to take any risks—and who can blame them? The Germans have gone even further by banning all British beef with bones. They have not done so for trade reasons, as the Minister said, but on the advice of their scientists. I remember the Minister coming to the House to say that he would take the Germans to the European Court and do this and that, but, of course, he did nothing.

The Government should wake up to the fears expressed and protect the consumer and the farmers who are in a mess through no fault of their own. I shall suggest a coherent programme to the Government—as I promised the hon. Member for Lancashire, West.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Clark: No. I promised to be brief, so I must continue.

The first thing that the Minister should do is slaughter all the calves of cows with BSE. That would limit the effect of vertical transmission. That is a sound insurance policy supported by many vets, the Women's Farming Union and, in effect, by the National Farmers Union. Secondly,

in view of the evidence that BSE has been transmitted to cats and possibly, although I hope not, to dogs, he should prohibit the use of cattle offal in pet food. The pet food manufacturers operate a voluntary ban and therefore one would have thought that they would support a statutory one, but no. When those manufacturers discussed it with me they were most alarmed at the prospect of a statutory ban. Many people will conclude that their refusal to endorse such a plan means that the voluntary ban is little more than a token gesture for many of them. Thirdly, the Government should stop feeding cattle offal to pigs and chickens.

Fourthly, the Government should make available to all bona fide scientists samples of infected animals wherever possible. No one has a monopoly of scientific knowledge about the new disease—the wider the scientific investigation the better. I regret that the Minister has so far blocked that initiative and I hope that he will change his mind today. Fifthly, the Minister should be more frank with the House and the public. On Thursday, when we finally dragged him to the Dispatch Box, his behaviour was abysmal—*[Interruption.]* He promised to place a full statement of the Tyrrell committee in the Library. The fact that he produced only a 25-line Government minute is little short of disgraceful and does nothing to build confidence among farmers, scientists and the public.

Sixthly, the Minister should instigate a tagging system for all calves along the lines of the system currently operating in Northern Ireland. I hope that the Minister will take the opportunity today to advise farmers that they should heed the law and ensure that their movement books are up to date as that would be a precursor to any scheme for checking the movement of cattle.

My final suggestion is perhaps where we should begin. Why will not the Minister follow the specific recommendations of the Tyrrell committee for the random sampling of routinely slaughtered cattle so that we can judge the extent of the disease within the herd? The Minister has said that he has not done so because it is not a priority and he said that he always follows scientific advice. However, we know that the Minister picks that scientific advice which is convenient to him. I recommend the advice given to him by the Richmond committee to ban the sale of green top milk

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way? Come on.

Dr. Clark: I will give way to the hon. Lady in a moment; I promise.

The Minister was advised to ban green top milk, but he ignored the scientific evidence in favour of the consumer.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Having done his best for the past few minutes to destroy the beef industry, the hon. Gentleman is trying to destroy the green top milk producers, who proliferate in my constituency and parts of Yorkshire and whose milk is found to be extremely helpful, particularly for some skin conditions. It tastes superb, is very good and all the customers want it. Now the hon. Gentleman is trying to do that in, as well as the beef industry.

Dr. Clark: I think that the hon. Lady, in her enthusiasm for green top milk, which she never hides, did not quite listen to what I said. I was not arguing the merits or demerits of green top milk. What I was actually saying —I hope that the hon. Lady will listen—was that the Minister's scientists had recommended the abolition of green top milk, but on that occasion, rightly or wrongly, the Minister decided to reject the scientists' advice.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Quite right.

Dr. Clark: The hon. Lady says, "Quite right," but the point I am making is that the Minister picks and chooses his scientific advice.

We all know the real reason why the Minister is reluctant to do random testing. It is simple: he and the Parliamentary Secretary, the hon. Member for Penrith and The Border (Mr. Maclean), have insisted time and time again that no BSE cattle have entered the food chain. That was the famous belt-and-braces approach of the hon. Member for Penrith and The Border, of which he is so proud and about which he will tell us more this evening. Therefore, if it were found that BSE cattle had slipped through the net—as they have—the only honourable thing for the hon. Member and the right hon. Member to do would be to resign.

The Minister should desist from putting his own political career before the interests of the farmer and the consumer. The disease has the potential of a doomsday scenario. The British need, and have the right to expect, Government protection. They are certainly not getting it from this Government.

7.43 pm

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Gummer): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question, and to add instead thereof: 'supports the Government's determination to eradicate bovine spongiform encephalopathy; and commends Her Majesty's Government for basing its policy and actions to secure the safety of food on the best scientific advice and for the prompt implementation of the recommendations of its independent expert committees as the best means of safeguarding public and animal health.'.

I welcome this opportunity to put forward yet again the Government's clear position on BSE. First, the absolute priority for the Government is public health and the safety of the consumer. That must mean, first, that we take the best available advice; secondly, that we implement that advice completely and as quickly as possible; and thirdly, that we ensure that the public is fully informed of the detailed information that comes to us. It is for these reasons that I can repeat with confidence the chief medical officer's statement that there is no scientific justification for not eating British beef.

Therefore, the first question the House must address is whether the Government have any alternative but to accept the advice of the experts. I do not believe that any Minister could sustain a policy based upon setting aside the recommendations of our most eminent scientists and medics. So our policy must be based absolutely four square on that. But the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) has claimed that we have done "nowt". Let us go through the facts.

Mr. Hind: My right hon. Friend will have noticed that I put a reasonable question to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark)—would he, in the circumstances, ban British beef for sale to the public? Quite clearly, he did not answer the question. The clear implication of ducking that question is that he agrees with my right hon. Friend that British beef is safe for the public to consume.

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend is right. I have noted down the seven answers given, and they did not include the proposal that we should ban British beef.

BSE was first identified in November 1986, thanks to the alertness and skill of the staff at the Ministry's veterinary investigation centres and the central veterinary laboratory. That was the point at which the hon. Member for South Shields suggested that we do nothing. I hope that he will listen carefully to what I have to say. Because so little was known about the disease at that early stage, a number of research projects were immediately initiated, including work to determine its course and clinical picture, and to develop and refine techniques necessary to obtain a definitive diagnosis. Such knowledge is an essential prerequisite to determining what action is appropriate to deal with any disease.

What the hon. Gentleman suggests the Government should have done was precisely what he accused us of doing—running around, hoping for something to turn up, without knowing what we were supposed to be looking for. Instead, we did what any sensible Government would do: we immediately set up the research to enable us to act. A detailed study had been started as soon as the disease had been identified to determine its cause. Initially, a large number of possibilities had to be considered, including the use of pharmaceutical products, vaccines, pesticides, herbicides, and whether other livestock such as sheep were kept on the farm.

Further excellent work at the central veterinary laboratory enabled that list to be narrowed down to protein feed derived from sheep infected with scrapie. As soon as that was apparent, a ban was introduced, from July 1988, on the use of ruminant-based protein in ruminant ration. Therefore, it is quite clear that, far from doing nothing, the Government did the two precise things necessary before they could take action. When they had the results, they took action immediately.

From the outset, field investigations and laboratory work were being undertaken to develop a clear understanding and knowledge of the clinical picture and diagnostic techniques. It is all right for the hon. Member for South Shields now to say that he knew all about it, but he did not then. We were finding out all about it so that we could take the action we did.

There is no point in requiring notification if one cannot fully describe the clinical symptoms that enable vets in the field to be able to identify a particular disease. In the same way, until the diagnostic techniques were well developed, it would not have been possible to confirm whether or not an animal had the disease. When a clear picture emerged, the disease was made notifiable—June 1988. Yet again, we acted immediately. We got the results and acted on them.

While that work was being completed, in April 1988, my Department, in conjunction with the Department of Health, established a group of eminent scientific and medical experts, under the chairmanship of Sir Richard Southwood, professor of zoology at Oxford university. Their task was to advise the Government on all aspects of BSE, including any human health implications. Two months later, on 22 June that year, interim advice was received that, as a precautionary measure, all affected cattle should be slaughtered and destroyed.

Mr. John Garrett (Norwich, South): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Gummer: If I may finish the paragraph, I shall be happy to do so.

We accepted that advice on 7 July. All the necessary legislation and operational arrangements were agreed and drawn up within a month, and the slaughter with compensation scheme was introduced on 8 August. All the animals slaughtered are destroyed by burial or incineration, so that no part of them can enter the food chain.

Mr. Garrett: On a genuine point of reassurance, is the Minister happy with the way carcases are disposed of, with the heads incinerated but the spinal columns left in them? I understand that there is scientific opinion to say that the spinal column should be removed before burial.

The right hon. Gentleman will know that in Norfolk there is some anxiety about the dumping of no fewer than 100 carcases in a dump that is not very far from the river that supplies Norwich's household water.

Mr. Gummer: I have looked into the issue because the matter was raised with me; it is a local authority—authorised tip for various toxic substances and the like. If the hon. Gentleman is worried about the tip, I shall re-examine it, but the local authority's view is that it is perfectly suitable for these purposes.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Gummer: I should like to continue, because I have something to say about these matters later in which the hon. Gentleman might be interested——

Mr. Home Robertson *rose*——

Mr. Gummer: No, I want to continue.

Nearly two years ago, we acted effectively and decisively on the very best scientific advice to stop the likely source of the disease and to take affected animals out of the food chain——

Mr. Home Robertson *rose*——

Mr. Gummer: I shall come back to the hon. Gentleman.

The Southwood report was published on 27 February 1989. It pointed out that scrapie, the related disease in sheep, had been present in the national flock for more than 200 years and that there had been no evidence of transmission to man. The report also concluded from present evidence that it was likely that cattle would prove to be a dead-end host for the disease agent.

As to the hon. Gentleman's suggestion that we have acted slowly or ineffectively, I hope that he will recall that the working party greatly welcomed the speed with which the Government acted on the animal feed ban and to implement the working party's recommendations. The hon. Gentleman therefore cannot sustain any allegation that we acted improperly or in a dilatory way without coming into clear conflict with the evidence of the Southwood working party.

The Government did not stop there. First, they agreed and implemented all the Southwood recommendations. Everything that this most eminent group of scientists asked us to do we did—and more. We did not do nowt; we did what the group asked us to do and more. Southwood did not recommend that the offal ban was necessary, but the Southwood report concluded that, if there were to be any BSE agent harboured in animals not previously known to be affected, it would be in the specified offal. We

have therefore taken out all the specified offal from all adult cattle reaching the slaughterhouse, so as to make doubly sure that consumers are protected. So once again the Government have acted to implement all that, and more than, the experts recommended.

One of the most important Southwood recommendations was the establishment of a consultative committee on research, under the chairmanship of Dr. David Tyrrell—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for South Shields may be talking now, but he said that the Government had done nowt. I am going through what the Government did point by point so that the public can see that we acted correctly and speedily on all of them——

Mr. Home Robertson *rose——*

Mr. Gummer: I am going through point by point; when I have got through them all, I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman.

This group of experts was set up to advise my Department and the Department of Health on research work in progress or proposed in relation to BSE and the other transmissible spongiform encephalopathies, on any additional work required, and on the priorities for further research. In fact, a major research effort had been under way since the disease was first identified. More than £2 million has already been spent, and a further £12 million has been allocated over the next three years.

Dr. Tyrrell identified three categories of research: first, research of top priority. All that is under way. Secondly, he identified research of medium priority; all that is under way, too. We are now working our way through the areas of lowest priority. Some of them are under way, but some have not yet reached the stage of working out protocols.

Of course, the hon. Member for South Shields has picked on one of the lowest priority points and suggested that it is the most important of all. Odd that it was in the list of lowest priority. Odd, too, that the Tyrrell committee has said that it does not believe that action on this proposal would be sensible at this time, because it would not be a sensible use of these facilities and resources. It is odd policy to tell me that the thing of which I am most guilty is not acting on one of the elements in the list of lowest priorities—the very aspect that the Tyrrell committee has suggested should be left on one side for the time being.

Mr. Home Robertson: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Gummer: I should very much like to finish one more paragraph, and then I shall have finished my list.

The House will understand that I am keen on the research part of the process, because, if we could find a diagnostic test, we could rid the country of BSE that much more quickly. If I found additional aspects of research that we were not doing but which would make a genuine contribution, I would have them done. If the hon. Member for South Shields suggests that we should not breed from calves of BSE-infected animals, I must tell him that I have asked the Tyrrell committee to tell me what would be best.

The Tyrrell committee produced a report for me—not a very long report, but it is in the Library. As I told the hon. Gentleman, for he wrote me a letter on the subject, I expect that Dr. Tyrrell will be giving me a longer report some time soon, and I shall place it in the Library as well—just as I place all information that is given to me and on which these decisions are made.

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle) *rose——*

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Member for South Shields does his case no good by pretending that the material is not made available——

Dr. David Clark: My charge against the Minister, as he acknowledged, is that he has not made the Tyrrell report on this subject available, although he promised to do so. Is he telling the House that this 25-line document is the Tyrrell report? If it is, can he explain why it begins:

"Spongiform encephalopathy advisory committee under Dr. David Tyrrell says"?

I would have read that as the Government's interpretation of the Tyrrell report. It is a travesty of the truth to suggest that it is the report itself.

Mr. Gummer: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman does not understand the facts. Dr. Tyrrell reports to me. I then publicly state exactly what he has told me—*[Interruption.]* I do think it very important, as we are discussing a statement by a most eminent chairman of a working party——

Mr. Martlew *rose——*

Mr. Gummer: No, I shall finish what I have to say first. Dr. Tyrrell has reported to me; I have published the report —[HON. MEMBERS: "Where is it?"] In the Library, and I am holding a copy of it now—*[Laughter.]* I hope that Opposition Members will listen carefully, because there is a whole series of other circumstances in which I am asking for further information, and I expect the working party to present its conclusions in this way. That is what I have published, and any further statements by Dr. Tyrrell will also be published.

The Opposition cannot have it both ways: if we are going to make a document public, we make it public even if it is very short.

Dr. David Clark: Is the Minister saying that this is the Tyrrell report, or is he saying that this is his interpretation of the report? It is odd for the Minister to say, "Dr. Tyrrell says . . . " If it were the Tyrrell report it would start by saying "My committee says . . . " I suggest that we are getting the Minister's interpretation of that report.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman may submit that but he is utterly, totally and categorically wrong. This is Dr. Tyrrell as chairman of the committee giving me his advice, which is what he was asked for. I have published that advice. Dr. Tyrrell will expand on it, and I shall publish the expanded advice. He will advise me on a wide range of other matters, and I shall publish his advice. The hon. Gentleman is doing the House a grave disservice by trying to hit Dr. Tyrrell in this way.

Mr. Home Robertson *rose——*

Mr. Gummer: I will not give way. I will complete what I have to say about the Tyrrell statement and then give way.

It is clear that the Opposition charge that we have done nowt is wholly and utterly unfounded. The hon. Member for South Shields is attempting to suggest that which he knows to be untrue and is continuing the campaign which is based, I am sad to say, on an attempt to invent things that are not only far from the truth but have been proved out of his own mouth to be wrong.

Mr. Home Robertson: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way at last. Brevity in reports is generally welcome, but this may be the exception. Diagnosis is crucial. The Minister said that all BSE-affected cattle were being destroyed, but that is just not possible. He cannot say that, because the only way to diagnose which cattle are affected with BSE is to examine the brains of the cattle after slaughter. Why is the right hon. Gentleman still refusing to take samples from the brains of cattle slaughtered at slaughterhouses in order to establish whether what he says is true?

Mr. Gummer: I do not think the hon. Gentleman understands the purpose of that piece of research. It does not do that at all. It is suggested that some years are spent on research into what was in the brain to see whether one could find the existence of sub-clinical circumstance giving rise to BSE. I know that the hon. Gentleman is an expert on a wide range of matters. He should take it from me that the most eminent experts in the field have said that this is a low-priority matter and have asked me not to take this line of research because at the moment there are other more important things to be done. I do not know why the hon. Gentleman wants to put his personal view ahead of the clear advice of the committee.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton) *rose*——

Mr. Gummer: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would like to wait, because he will have an opportunity to intervene at a more appropriate time.

All the results of the research will be made publicly available because, throughout the debate, I have made it clear that the information and knowledge available to us will be made public. I intend to continue on precisely that course. Any suggestion by the Opposition that anything is hidden or locked up is entirely without foundation. I shall give two examples. Although there is no evidence of any link between spongiform encephalopathies in cats and BSE, I insisted that information regarding the Bristol cat recently diagnosed with this disease be made public.

The hon. Member for South Shields should look again at his allegation that I have prevented scientists from speaking to the press. That allegation was all over the press, and the hon. Gentleman confirmed that he put it there. It is utterly and completely untrue and I am sure that he will wish to apologise when I have completed my speech. The only advice to Government scientists which my Department has recently reiterated are departmental guidelines, which were prepared not by me or my predecessor or his predecessor but were, albeit in a more complicated form, guidelines inherited from the previous Labour Government. There has been no change in the guidance that, when a scientist or veterinary surgeon is asked for an interview by the press, he should inform the press office so that we know that the facts are there. That is what the Labour Government's guidance contained, and we have not changed it.

The hon. Member for South Shields did himself a grave disservice by suggesting that I was in any way trying to stop anyone saying anything that he would previously have been able to say. I ask the hon. Gentleman to withdraw his allegation, which has caused considerable concern to the scientists in my Department, who would not work on the basis that the hon. Gentleman has said that I suggested. If the hon. Gentleman will not withdraw, he underlines the fact that almost everything he says merely springs from his own fantasy and is not the fact of the matter.

Dr. David Clark: May I clarify the matter? I said that Government scientists have been told not to speak to Members of Parliament or the press on this issue. The person in question, whom I have in mind, was telephoned in the middle of the night and told that. If the Minister is prepared to get a letter from the Head of the Government, the Prime Minister, assuring me that that individual will not be sacked as he was threatened, will not be reprimanded and will not have his career jeopardised, I will talk to that person to see whether he is prepared to let me name him. When we are dealing with a Government who, in their own words, are economical with the truth, I must have that from the Prime Minister.

Mr. Gummer: There is no change whatever in what I said earlier and nobody, but nobody, would have his career jeopardised in that way. The hon. Gentleman has failed to produce his evidence and has failed to withdraw. He has been shown to be a sham and his words on everything else can be judged on that.

The House would expect me to look closely at the effects of this discussion on encephalopathies. There is no doubt that it would focus attention on this class of disease. That is bound to be true of an issue that is constantly talked about, and it means that people will look even more closely at the matter. It was for that reason that the post-mortem on the Bristol cat took place. Similarly, we have now confirmed the Northern Ireland case. The specific advice of the Southwood committee was that we should be particularly alert to the possible occurrence of encephalopathies in household pets. The problem facing us is that such illnesses may have no connection at all with BSE, and, indeed, may have been present for a long time. Therefore, we have a duty to the public to do two things. First, we have to be entirely open about the results of any tests on suspect animals; and secondly, we have to be very careful about jumping to premature conclusions.

This focus of attention has resulted in two or possibly three identified cases of encephalopathy in cats. Of course it would be quite wrong for us not to be very concerned about that evidence, but that should not blind us to the arguments clearly presented in last week's *New Scientist* leader. I hope that the hon. Member for South Shields will read that leader and take it to heart. I hope that he will take it more to heart than he has taken note of the fact that his outrageous allegations yesterday have been shown to be wrong.

The House will recognise that I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the reasons why his comments are so wide of the mark not just to get the record straight or to score points at the expense of the shadow agriculture spokesman but because, in matters of this seriousness, the crucial issue is public health. Party and personal advantage must not be allowed to interfere.

I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman should have sought to undermine the views of the experts. That is damaging, because it gives the public the impression that there is a major disagreement between scientists on this issue. The men and women who are experts in these matters gave clear advice to the chief medical officer, my Department and the Department of Health, and it is on that basis that I am able to repeat the chief medical officer's advice that

eating British beef is safe. Indeed, it appears to be on that evidence that the hon. Gentleman thinks that eating British beef is safe. Therefore, I am surprised that he has not asked those local authorities that have stopped children in their schools eating British beef to start to serve beef once again.

The hon. Member for South Shields has made a number of suggestions. His first was that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food should be renamed the Ministry of Food and Agriculture and that there should be created an independent food administration making its own independent statements. If we apply that to BSE, it is difficult to see how this differs from Southwood and Tyrrell giving independent advice, except that that independent advice is accepted by the Government but not by the Opposition. The hon. Gentleman does not want us to stick to what the experts say: he wants us to replace this with his own political opinions. His proposal smacks of that.

The hon. Gentleman suggests that we must not breed from the cows that have BSE and claims that that would speed eradication. I ask him to read again what Tyrrell says. He has specifically warned us that to do that would not necessarily speed up the removal of BSE but might in certain circumstances have the opposite effect. He has made a number of other proposals, all of which have been rejected by the scientists to whom we have turned. In an odd phrase, he spoke of the "fragile conclusions" of Southwood. He wishes to replace the conclusions of Southwood by a series of his own personal views. No Government could deal on that basis and no Government could take his line.

Mr. Lord: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Gummer: No, I must come to the end of what I have to say.

The same thing happened when the hon. Member for South Shields made his allegation on rendering. He was not prepared to share with the House the detailed explanation of how he ties up any changes in Government decisions with his views on the effects of rendering on BSE. There is no doubt that had he argued his case through, point by point, it would be seen as hollow in this House as it is so seen everywhere outside it, except in Labour party circles.

All that the hon. Gentleman is left with of all his suggestions is one single change—the change of title from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to the Ministry of Food and Agriculture. That is at best cosmetic and at worst an attempt unworthily to evade this serious issue.

I do not want any hon. Member to feel that, once the experts have pronounced, we are not willing to go back to them again. The Government have acted throughout on what the experts have recommended. We have acted immediately, we have acted as they have recommended, and we have acted to do all and more that they have required. We are willing to go back to them again and ask them again. The House will remember that, even though my expert advice had not recommended that there should be a ban on breeding from the progeny of BSE-infected animals, I asked the Tyrrell committee to consider this again in the light of all the evidence. I have placed copies of its advice in the Library, and I have said that I will place copies of any further advice there as well.

Similarly, two months ago I asked for expert veterinary advice on the removal of brains in slaughterhouses. It has now come. This broadly supported current practices, but I am asking the Tyrrell committee to consider this, and any other aspects of slaughterhouse practices that it feels may be relevant to the problem. I reiterate what I have said often before: that I shall always be willing to refer the issues which arise in this matter to experts, and will make their advice public.

The real issue here is that the public want to be assured that the Government have acted on the best available advice. They have that assurance. They want to be assured that the Government implement that advice in its entirety. They have that assurance. They want to be assured that the Government have taken these measures with the fullest practical speed. They have that assurance. They want to be assured that the Government are putting all the necessary resources into research. They have that assurance. Above all, the public want to know that the Government put public safety first. They have that assurance.

This debate gives us the chance to show that the Government have taken the full range of measures proposed in the best scientific and medical advice. Faced with a disease of this kind, we must expect that people can easily be worried and realise that their anxieties are difficult to dispel. That is why it is so important for those who have different views not to promote anxiety, but to put forward their views so that they may be judged by their expert peers. I am always willing to ask the experts to consider proposals that are put to me.

The hon. Gentleman's points have been so considered and have been turned down. If any have not been so considered, I will ensure that they are. I hope that those who so often speak on television will come to us first with their arguments and facts so that they may be considered by those best able to assess them—the experts in the field and not politicians, who are merely amateurs.

There is no evidence that the BSE agent is harmful to man. Nevertheless, the Government have taken four major measures to remove BSE-infected animals from the human food chain. They have acted to remove the specified offals from all adult cattle. They have cut off what is considered to be the source of the infection. We are investing large sums in research, and will continue to do so. This has been done on the advice of the scientific and medical experts. Therefore, unlike the Opposition, we can say with confidence that beef can be eaten safely by everyone, both adults and children. The House can give us its confidence, because what we do will be based on scientific advice, not on the theories of Labour party politicians.

Mr. Cohen: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The Minister repeatedly refused to give way to Opposition Back-Benchers. As to bovine spongiform encephalopathy in cats, the right hon. Gentleman said——

Hon. Members: That is not a point of order.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. It is for me to decide whether the hon. Gentleman is in order.

Mr. Cohen: I am raising a point of order. The Minister said that he had received advice from the Southwood committee that special consideration should be given to

[Mr. Cohen]

BSE in cats, but the right hon. Gentleman did not reveal the date on which he was given that advice, which is crucial——

Madam Deputy Speaker: I know now that the hon. Gentleman is not raising a point of order but a matter for debate. I call Mr. Alan W. Williams.

8.20 pm

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): I am grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to follow that extraordinary bullish and brash speech from the Minister. I want to correct the right hon. Gentleman on two or three points.

The chief medical officer did not say that British beef is safe to eat. He said—and the Minister quoted him accurately the first time—that there is no scientific justification for not eating British beef. That is a very clear double negative. The chief medical officer did not say British beef is safe to eat because one cannot prove that it is.

Mr. Gummer: The chief medical officer went on to say:

"I therefore have no hesitation in saying that beef can be eaten safely by everyone, both adults and children, including patients in hospital."

I do not see how that does not mean that beef is safe to eat.

Mr. Williams: I shall return to the point that no scientist in Britain today, no matter how distinguished—including the chief medical officer—can say with certainty that all British beef is safe to eat.

The Southwood committee estimated that the epidemic would peak at 350 to 400 incidents per month—and that figure was quoted earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark). Already, the death rate is 350 to 450 cows per week, which is four times Southwood's projected figure—and the rate is doubling every six months. Despite the Minister's extraordinary complacency, the figure is multiplying exponentially. If the plateau had been reached, there could possibly be room for complacency, but in reality BSE is increasing way out of control.

Given the best scientific advice available at the time, Southwood predicted that cattle were likely to be the dead end host, but evidently that is not the case. BSE in cattle can be passed to mice, mink, deer, and possibly cats. It is very possible that scrapie in sheep evolves, mutates and changes when transmitted to cattle—and that the resultant strain, which manifests itself as BSE, could be many times more virulent and pathogenic than the scrapie from which it originated. In that respect, Southwood erred far too much on the side of optimism, and failed to make the more pessimistic assumptions that it should have made.

There are huge areas of ignorance in respect of BSE. It would benefit the debate if the Minister did not always display ebullient confidence and knock every argument to the floor—even if that is only in his own mind, because the consumer is far more discriminating and can see through the right hon. Gentleman's bullish arrogance. In any scientific inquiry, there needs to be more humility in the search for the truth. The fact remains that the scientists concerned, eminent though they may be, do not yet understand the key features of the disease. They do not know how widespread it is or how to diagnose it. With both scrapie and BSE, one can only reach a diagnosis by killing the suspect animal and examining its brain. It is incredible that such a viral particle or infective agent should be so hard to detect by normal diagnostic techniques.

We do not understand either how the disease is transmitted, or how scrapie became BSE. We do not know how other animals become infected by BSE. Most important of all, we cannot be certain that BSE does not affect human beings—no matter what may be said by Sir Donald Acheson, the Minister, or anyone else. It will take at least one decade before we can be sure whether BSE has any effect on human beings. To be as complacent as the Minister has shown himself to be, not only over the past few days but the past few years, is just as dangerous as scaremongering. There should be more balance in the debate, and greater consideration of both sides of the argument.

BSE is to be the subject of a "Horizon" programme on BBC2 tonight. The blurb for that programme in today's issue of *The Independent* says that

"scientists reveal that neither the facts nor the risks are fully understood."

That is the state of our knowledge. The Minister may not acknowledge all the uncertainties, but the president of the National Farmers Union does. Sir Simon Gourlay is also quoted in *The Independent* today as saying:

"People recognise when there are voids in information. At the moment there is little confidence in official statements and that is why there is mayhem . . . there is a fear of the unknown."

Sir Simon Gourlay has the modesty to accept the crisis of confidence that exists currently because of a fear of the unknown—but the Minister shows no such doubts. The debate would benefit also if the Minister and his colleagues, as well as MAFF, exhibited a little more humility and showed themselves willing to entertain some of the doubts shared both by the general public and leading scientists.

The effects of BSE are potentially so catastrophic that we should be adopting precautionary principles at every stage. Humans can recover from salmonella poisoning, but BSE is potentially an irreversible killer. It must be remembered that 100 years ago livestock was killed and consumed locally, but in today's food processing industry just one infected cow could contaminate 100 or 1,000 products and people.

The issue has gained extra momentum over the past two weeks because it has been found that cats have possibly died from contracting BSE. Those deaths might strike the House as trivial, and right hon. and hon. Members may question why cat deaths in Bristol, Belfast and Birmingham made the front pages of tabloid newspapers last week. However, if one considers the matter biologically, as carnivores, cats have digestive systems that are far more similar to those of human beings than cows. If the BSE particle or virus can survive the robust digestive system of a cat, containing as it does acids and enzymes to break down complex proteins, and damage its brain, at a molecular level it is most disturbing and significant that BSE can kill carnivores.

The more that BSE jumps species, in the way that scrapie jumps species, the more concerned every one of us should be. The two or three cat deaths that we have heard about could be just the beginning of an epidemic. Generally, when cats die no post-mortem is held.

Mr. Charles Wardle (Bexhill and Battle): Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that the chief medical officer at the Department of Health is wrong to assert that there is no risk to humans from eating beef?

Mr. Williams: If the hon. Gentleman had been listening, he would know that I said that no scientist can say that. The Southwood committee, which has produced perhaps the most authoritative document, said that the chance is extremely remote. I hope and pray that it cannot be transmitted to humans, but no scientist can say one way or the other. It will be at least a decade before we can give a firm no to that question.

In the meantime, following the precautionary principle, we should be doing all that we can to ensure that BSE-infected meat cannot enter the food chain. That is a reasonable request, which the NFU and the consumer will back. We should start the mass slaughter of the offspring of BSE-infected animals.

Scrapie passes from ewe to lamb. The AIDS virus passes from mother to foetus. The further the virus has progressed, the more likely it is that the mother will transmit it to the foetus, whereas if the mother is HIV positive, the chances of it being passed are perhaps 10 or 20 per cent. The further developed the virus is, the higher the probability.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Maclean): Would the hon. Gentleman persist with the policy of the mass slaughter of calves although the expert evidence suggests that it should not be done?

Mr. Williams: As my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields said, I do not see all the experts lining up on the Government side. A couple of weeks ago, the Government's chief veterinary officer, Keith Meldrum, said that in the meantime he supported veterinary advice to farmers not to breed from the offspring of infected cattle. He has strong doubts about vertical transmission. We should be adopting the precautionary principle. Wherever it is possible that meat may be infected by BSE, we should be taking it out of the food chain. It is probable that the calves of BSE-infected cattle carry BSE. The NFU and consumers consider that the slaughter of calves should be a matter of urgency. The Government should start to take swift action.

There should be random sampling in slaughterhouses of dead cows to ascertain the true incidence of BSE. We have figures only for those cows that showed clinical symptoms before they were slaughtered. There must be random inspection of the heads of all cows that are slaughtered.

There should be pilot studies in farms that have had multiple outbreaks of BSE. Many farms have had two, three or more cows suffering from BSE. The Government should undertake pilot studies of the mass slaughter of the herd to see how many have sub-clinical symptoms of BSE.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): I am finding it difficult to follow the hon. Gentleman. He was saying that we should proceed only on the certainties. He has made a substantial number of allegations, such as an epidemic of mad cats, without giving substance, belief or fact. Why does he believe that we should substitute his opinions or beliefs for the scientific facts that have been put forward by eminent scientists who say that we do not need a mass slaughter policy? Is he going along with Professor Richard Lacey, who has argued that 6 million cattle should be slaughtered?

Mr. Williams: No. I said that we should not work on the basis of certainties because there are no certainties. We must adopt the precautionary principle. If there is a chance of meat being infected, we should slaughter the calves of infected cows. That view is held not only by the Opposition but by the NFU and individual farmers in my constituency to whom I have spoken. In our part of the country, which is also represented by the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett), Dyfed has the highest incidence in Wales and, with the south west, probably the highest incidence in Britain.

It is appalling that offal from cows that may have sub-clinical BSE is still being fed to pigs and poultry. There is a danger of multiplying the disease and that it could jump species. We need to look carefully at the disposal of carcases. We must ensure that BSE-contaminated meat does not enter the food chain. Carcases have been buried in toxic waste tips, and I have read of headless carcases being disposed of in a refuse tip. We know that rats and birds feed from refuse tips. There is a danger of a BSE-infected animal carrying the disease to the rat and bird populations. It is absurd that we are disposing of carcases so carelessly.

There should be high temperature incineration to ensure that we get rid of the virus completely. The outbreak of BSE, as my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields said, is not the farmers' fault. The farmers suffer, but it is not their fault. It is the product of animal feeding. Scrapie got into animal feed, which was insuffiently heated. The Government reduced the temperature from 130 deg C, which previously killed scrapie, to 105 deg C and has allowed it to develop into BSE.

Farmers should be compensated; 100 per cent. compensation was made a year or two after the campaign on scrapie that was run by the Opposition and others, but when it comes to a slaughter policy for calves there should be 100 per cent. compensation.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields that potentially this is the greatest crisis that has faced agriculture this century. If the Government do not act much more decisively and quickly, instead of doing too little too late, it will become a crisis of epidemic proportions. When we are dealing with human health, it is wiser to err on the side of overkill than to tread timidly a year or two too late, as the Government are doing.

In the interests of the beef producer and the consumer, I hope that the Minister will carefully consider the points that have been made by Labour Members in the debate.

8.38 pm

Mr. Robert Boscawen (Somerton and Frome): The hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) has done his best to undermine the confidence of the industry and the consumer in the expert advisers to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the farming industry. I am sorry that he used his medical and scientific knowledge in that way. If the hon. Gentleman wants to express those views, he should take them to the committee that has been set up by my right hon. Friend the Minister

[Mr. Robert Boscawen]

and to those who are his peers in this discipline. The hon. Gentleman should not make his fears public. I am sorry that he made that speech.

I should like to say a few words on behalf of those in the livestock husbandry industry who have been worried about BSE for many months. They have suffered greatly in recent months because of lead contamination and the near catastrophe that resulted. They foresaw the serious scares—not backed by scientific evidence—that might be engendered about the effect of BSE on domestic meat consumption. They implored those of us who represent the south-west of England to express their fears to the Ministry and demand the clearest possible scientific research into this unpleasant disease as soon as possible so that British beef is cleared as safe for consumption at home and abroad.

Over the past year, many of us have implored the Department to do all that it can to come up with the answer. My right hon. Friend the Minister has explained what the answer was. The advice so far is begining to give confidence back to the beef producers. I hope that the House will say nothing more tonight to undermine that confidence.

I have seldom heard as disgraceful an attack on agriculture, undermining the confidence of the consumer, as that from the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark). In the few years in which I have been a Member, I do not think that I have ever heard quite such an irresponsible attack made from the Front Bench on either side of the House. I deplore it and shall do my utmost to ensure that those who husband the beef industry in my part of the country know about it. The hon. Gentleman should be ashamed of himself. He should be trying to restore confidence that our best scientists will find the cause of this disease—as I believe they will—and confidence in the results so far, which show that there is no evidence that beef is dangerous to humans. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would have served his party better if he had done that without trying to attack my right hon. Friend in a silly, personal, political way. It was one of the most disgraceful attacks that I have ever heard since becoming a Member.

8.42 pm

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): I have listened to the debate with considerable interest. The Minister put up a good, robust defence of his position. I could not agree with everything he said, but he made a much better job of it than the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) did in attacking him. The Minister's comments were helpful in that the industry and consumers were looking for some of the reassurances that he gave. We must be aware of the risks that may or may not be caused to beef because of the disease. There is no evidence that the disease can be transferred to humans, but we can never be certain.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Taylor: I shall give way later, but it is important that this point is clear in the minds of the industry and consumers. The Government's position and mine is that the disease's potential cannot be ruled out altogether. There is no reason to believe that the disease is present other than in the specified offal. It is important for peopl to be clear on that point, because it means that it is all righ to eat meat that has not been contaminated in any wa with that offal. Indeed, I ate some at the weekend However, I shall refer to loopholes in terms o contamination and the effort to eliminate the disease.

Mr. Hanley: As a Liberal Democrat council has banne the consumption of beef in schools in Richmond upo Thames, does the hon. Gentleman regard that a responsible or irresponsible given that, as he said, there i no scientific evidence to support that approach? Thi action has caused much fear among people who say, "I our councillors ban beef, it must be bad."

Mr. Taylor: Emphasising it is unhelpful, but variou councils have taken various actions. I happen to hav spoken to councillors in Richmond upon Thames abou what they have done. Their action has been similar to tha in my county, although they took a different route becaus of different circumstances. Because parents made th request, the authorities have ensured that all children hav the option of not eating beef, and only where tha alternative is not provided have they stopped serving beef

In terms of public concern, that is not unreasonable Some parents would not be reassured if they felt that thei children had no option but to eat beef. They would fee that their children were being forced to eat something tha the parents would prefer they did not eat. I do not criticis that attitude. But it would only be unreasonable ha councillors said that beef was unsafe and should never b available to children.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Th hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley made a perfectly proper intervention, but councillors of a political colours have made a decision on the facts as the understand them. Does my hon. Friend agree that this i not a party political matter? The key point is to ensure tha the evidence is known to the people making the decision and that they make, democratically, the best decisions. W all aim to achieve the right results for everyone in a council areas.

Mr. Taylor: I should like to make progress, movin away from that incidental issue and commenting on wha Ministers should do.

The Government have consistently refused calls by th National Farmers Union and others, including me, t label foodstuffs. They are still refusing, although th European Community may force compliance to som degree by 1992, but even then there is no requirement t state the percentage of ingredients. Given what appears t have happened because of the inclusion of offal, it i understandable that farmers should feel strongly abou what they are being given to feed their livestock—feedin stuffs about which they have no knowledge and over whic they have no control. In an article in *The Sunday Telegrap* yesterday, the Gloucestershire trading standards office said:

"We probably carry out more tests on feeding stuffs tha any other county and we find more errors with them than wit anything else we check. We find something wrong in about in 8 samples. On a national scale it indicates a big problem In one sample of calf food, we found string, buttons fro overalls and little lumps of metal."

Apart from those farmers who grow food for thei cows, farmers could not be sure of what was going into th

feeding stuffs. I have received letters however from farmers pointing out that not all had fed this stuff to their animals, and whose livestock are not therefore at risk. While specified offals have been banned from feedstuffs for cows, a problem remains for farmers in respect of other species, such as pigs. The Minister may say that the risk is acceptable but farmers may nevertheless prefer not to take it, and they cannot be altogether sure what they are feeding to their animals.

We tabled an amendment to the Food Safety Bill to require the labelling of animal feedstuffs and the banning of the inclusion of potentially hazardous contents in feedstuffs for all species. That is not unreasonable. I am told that it is perfectly possible to achieve that using modern computer techniques; certainly, the NFU believes that it is possible. I hope that the Minister will use the opportunity presented by the concern over BSE to act on that amendment. I do not understand why he will not. Such an amendment would greatly reassure both consumers and industry, so I hope that he will reconsider.

We must also consider the use of suspect offals at all in feedstuffs for pigs and poultry. The Government say that they have not had scientific advice to the effect that that should be banned. I accept that, but there is no doubt that it would reassure customers and the industry—which has expressed its concern, I am sure, to other hon. Members as well as myself—if those specified offals were banned. That would give us a cast-iron guarantee. The scientific advice is that there is no evidence that there is a risk, but we must remember that we were originally told that the disease could not be transferred to other species such as cats. But that now appears to have happened. Such a move would make sense in terms of the current public concern. If we are to help the industry and protect the consumer, we should try to meet those concerns.

As recently as 14 May, Ministers refused to give a cast-iron guarantee that pigs and poultry could not be affected. In a written answer on 28 March, the Minister listed eight research projects dealing with this very matter. The fact that there are eight research projects does not necessarily point to a definite risk, but it suggests that scientists and the Minister believe that the matter is worthy of further investigation. If that is so, to reassure the public, we should play safe and ban the use of specified offal in feedstuffs for all species.

We must also consider pet food. Two, or perhaps three, cats appear to have been infected with a feline version of the disease. Yet on 29 March the Minister said in the Standing Committee considering the Food Safety Bill that there was no evidence of naturally occurring spongiform encephalopathy in cats and dogs. He therefore proposed to do nothing. In response to the amendment that I had tabled to ban the use of specified offal in pet foods, the Minister said:

"I do not want to get into the position where I as a politician, go into a crazy panic over pet food, when all the evidence is against there being any risk whatever of the disease jumping species to cats and dogs. I could ban the pet food for no good reason and the scientists could a year later say that I was wrong—[*Official Report, Standing Committee B*, 29 March 1990; c. 125.]

That was fair enough. But, unfortunately for the Minister, only a month or two later, people are telling him, "You got it wrong; you should have banned the use of specified offals in pet food." In other words, he would have done better to play safe, as I argued at the time, and that option is still open to him.

Before the present difficulties arose, and while the Food Safety Bill was in Committee, I wrote to the pet food manufacturers to ask whether they were operating the voluntary ban of which we had been told. They responded to the effect that they were. Some 5 per cent. of the pet food manufacturers are not covered by the manufacturers' association, but given that the manufacturers say that they are operating a voluntary ban—indeed, they argued that they were operating it before the present ban was introduced in respect of food for human consumption—why do not the Government close the loophole and make illegal the use of specified offals in pet food? We know that a problem has arisen. Why do we not take the action which manufacturers appear to accept—but which as yet we have no guarantee that they are implementing? The Minister said earlier that the manufacturers had been warned that they should watch developments in respect of cats and dogs. It therefore surprises me that when I raised the matter in Committee the Government said that there was no evidence whatever to suggest that they should take such action. That does not seem to make sense.

We then have to deal with the protection of cattle. The Minister has consistently refused to accept that there is any justification for slaughtering the offspring of BSE-infected cattle. When I asked him about it on 15 March, he replied:

"We have no plans to do so.—[*Official Report*, 15 March 1990; Vol. 169, c. *324*.]

Tonight he has told us why he made that decision. He cited the Tyrrell report. I accept that Tyrrell did not recommend that the offspring of BSE-infected cattle should be slaughtered. But the report said:

"Infection from cow to calf is a possibility that cannot be excluded at present."

On Report, I tabled an amendment to the Food Safety Bill that would ensure that farmers were fully compensated for the slaughter of those calves. I do not necessarily argue that we should go that far. I listened with interest to what the Minister said, and he may be right. I do not claim to have the necessary expertise to say one way or the other, but I know how the public and the industry are reacting and I do not think that they would be dismayed if the Minister took such a course, which might help to resolve the present crisis of confidence in the beef industry. But if the Government are not prepared to do that—and given that Tyrrell specifically said that we could not rule out a potential risk—why do not they ensure that there is at least a comprehensive tagging and registration scheme so that we know what is happening to the offspring? At the moment, we may believe that there is no reason for slaughter but, according to Tyrrell, we cannot rule out the possibility that that need will arise. We heard tonight that the Government's chief veterinary officer had said:

"It would not surprise me to find that maternal transmission can occur."

A minimum requirement to register seems to me eminently sensible.

When the problem first arose, the Minister said:

"Nobody takes this disease more seriously than I do, but there is no justification for further action."

Perhaps there was no justification, but given the present crisis of confidence for industry and consumer, the Minister should be seen to act to close every loophole, and that is one of the loopholes.

Following the progress of food from farm to plate, we go next to the abattoir. The Minister has at last told us the result of his further consultations about abattoir procedures. He will recall that, early this year,

[Mr. Taylor]

environmental health officers expressed serious concerns —expressed first in my constituency and subsequently taken up by their organisation—about the way in which some abattoirs operated. In effect, the abattoirs were, and are, attempting to get round the Minister's regulations banning specified offals. To realise the full value of the heads, they are split open with band saws. Inevitably, some splatter results and there is a risk of cross-contamination.

The heads are split and the broken brain removed so that the full value of the total carcase can be realised. That makes relatively little financial difference to the farmer, but in an abattoir where huge numbers of heads are processed the practice of splitting heads in that way is significant for profit margins. Clearly, that practice avoided the spirit of the Minister's advice. After I met the Minister and discussed the problem with him, he said that he would seek further advice. I was told that he would meet me in two weeks and tell me what advice he had been given. Well, some two months on, the results of the advice were announced today.

If cooking cannot kill the disease, anyone with common sense will appreciate that washing the meat if splatter occurs is no guarantee of safety. Perhaps the most important point is that washing down will not reassure the public if it does not reassure environmental health officers. I am pleased that the Minister has referred that point to the Tyrrell committee. However, I suspect that the committee will say that there is no scientific evidence to justify stopping that head-splitting process. Perhaps that would be an example of advisers advising, but Ministers must decide to ensure that even the most unlikely loophole is stopped. I am referring only to the specified offals and the risk of cross-contamination of what I said at the beginning of my speech is otherwise perfectly good meat.

Mr. Gummer: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his comments about what I have done. I hope that he recognises that the matter has gone to the Tyrrell committee because our expert advice is that what we are doing is in general perfectly acceptable. However, I do not want there to be a scintilla of doubt.

The Tyrrell committee has made it clear that it should make its judgments according to the worst possible scenario. The hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) suggested that everyone was acting as though maternal transmission was impossible. Far from it. We always consider the worst possible scenario because that is the only way in which we can make judgments of this kind and that is what the Tyrrell committee is meant to do. Once we have asked such a committee to make its judgments on the worst possible scenario, we must accept those judgments and not second-guess them. If we second-guess them, we tell the public that we do not trust the people whom we have brought together to provide advice. We must be careful about suggesting that we should always act because we believe that the public will thereby be supportive. That is why I said clearly that I stick by the advice which is based on the worst possible scenario.

Mr. Taylor: As I have described, in abattoirs a band saw splits the head and enters brain material. Some of that splatters out and some remains on the band saw which is then used on other parts of other carcases. The advice is that the band saw and the area round the process should be washed down after each head splitting. I do not believe that that happens. No one could believe that a proper and thorough washing down would occur after that process. Therefore, the scientific advice does not match up to common sense.

I learnt only today that a Scottish abattoir has a new technique for coping with heads. In that abattoir a stainless steel nozzle is attached to the end of a hose line. An extension from that fits exactly into the hole made by the stun bolt. Water is then forced into the skull at high pressure and the brain is forced out through the neck cavity at high speed in a gush. The matter goes everywhere. I do not believe that washing down takes place after each such action. A similar problem occurs with mechanically recovered meat.

Finally, I have a warning on which I hope the Minister will act. Also, the public should be aware of this point about the British beef industry. The Minister confirmed to me in a letter that there have been some cases of BSE in the Irish Republic. It is a very small number, but there have been cases. Therefore, beef is imported without any controls on specified offals that may be a risk. Will the Minister reconsider his inaction on this and act to ban the specified offals from meat imports?

I also suggest that it is not impossible—I am sure that the Minister shares my concern over this matter—that there is BSE infection in other countries in Europe, but that has not been reported. We have a well-controlled industry in this country and an awful lot of precautions are taken. It would be wrong for people to believe that British beef is more dangerous than any other beef. Because of the lack of controls and the situation in the Irish Republic, arguably imported beef is more at risk from cross-infection. However, that should not be a reason for the Minister to be complacent.

I have raised a number of specific suggestions about things that the Minister could do to reassure the industry and the consumer and I hope that he will act on that advice.

9.4 pm

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): A great number of people in this country, particularly people in the food and farming industry, must wish that we were not having this debate. Right hon. and hon. Members who represent agricultural constituencies might share that view. Although I do not wish to dismiss the seriousness of BSE, least said, soonest mended. I appreciate that that advice is unlikely to be taken by Opposition parties. However, I congratulate the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) on his latter sentence. He went to great lengths to explain that there is nothing wrong with British beef. I entirely endorse his remark that British beef is arguably still the best beef in the world.

Opposition parties wish to score political points. They are not concerned about the damage that they might inflict upon the innocent victims of their scaremongering. BSE is not contagious. What is contagious is the panic that national and local politicians create in the minds of the general public about the food that they eat. The hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) spoke about the calamitous effects on farmers and consumers. This is not a political issue. Whatever political case Opposition parties may think exist, they make their case badly and without any consideration of the continued damage to public

confidence, or of the commercial damage to the food and farming industry and, in particular, the men and women whose livelihoods depend upon that industry. Opposition parties know only too well that this is essentially an animal health issue. It is not even a human health issue. The irresponsibility of Opposition parties is matched only by the blatant scaremongering of those who started this hare running.

Opposition Members protest that they are concerned about the farming industry and consumers, but they, together with the media, know that food scares are good copy because food is directly related to everyday life. It affects every person in the land, and it is a matter to which every member of the public can relate. That is why whenever something is supposed to be wrong with food it can almost be guaranteed to get headlines.

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman listened carefully to the opening speech by my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), but in case he did not I assure him that we have no interest in a food scare or in encouraging any food scare. We are concerned to restore confidence in the British beef industry. I challenge the hon. Gentleman to read in *Hansard* tomorrow the speeches by my hon. Friends the Members for South Shields and for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) and my own speech. The hon. Gentleman will not find one sentence that damages the beef industry.

Mr. Gill: The hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) makes my point for me. Words will not alter very much, but the more we politicians go banging on about the issue and making sure that it gets headlines in the newspapers and appears in every news bulletin day in and day out, the more the industry is prejudiced. Of greater concern is that fear and uncertainty is prolonged among the general public. I deprecate the irresponsible way in which the Opposition play on innocent people's fears. I deplore their rejection of evidence simply because it does not suit their own bias.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight) *rose*——

Mr. Gill: I shall give way to my hon. Friend in a moment.

That attitude is not untypical of the Labour party, which cannot make its case without recourse to scaremongering.

Mr. Alan W. Williams *rose*——

Mr. Gill: I shall give way first to my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) and then I shall gladly give way to the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams).

Mr. Field: Is my hon. Friend aware that in the canteen on Thursday evening two very large trays of steak pie were completely sold out because Opposition Members were purchasing it? I got the last portion and jolly tasty it was, too—and it was British beef.

Mr. Gill: I am most encouraged by what my hon. Friend has said. I am sure that all responsible hon. Members know—and will demonstrate on every possible occasion—that there is no possible threat to one's health from eating British beef.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way, but must advise him that I shall not be as helpful to him as was the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field). The hon. Gentleman referred to the propriety of holding a debate on the subject of BSE. Would he prefer the Opposition to sit still, to talk about all the other issues, but not to mention BSE? Would he prefer the Opposition to allow the Government simply to carry on with their work behind the scenes and allow the number of BSE cases to double every six months and quadruple every year, as is happening now?

Mr. Gill: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the statesmanlike remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Boscawen) who pointed out that there are better vehicles for exercising concern and better forums for expressing the detailed and technical aspects of this matter than a debate on the Floor of the Chamber. The hon. Gentleman knows full well that events in the Chamber are now recorded on television for all the world to see. If would be far more responsible if the Opposition awaited the findings of the Select Committee on Agriculture which, as the hon. Gentleman knows, will investigate this matter and take evidence from whoever seeks to give evidence to it—the hon. Gentleman himself may seek to do so—and will then report back to the House with its findings. I am sure that the general public would be much more satisfied and would have their minds put more at rest if that inquiry were allowed to proceed in a rational and calm manner.

The hon. Member for South Shields accused my right hon. Friend the Minister of doing too little, too late. When the hon. Gentleman makes such comments Conservative Members wonder what he would have done differently. Would he have taken advice from different sources? Would he have rejected the advice of Tyrrell and Southwood and relied more on the advice proffered by Professor Lacey, which might be more in tune with his own political prejudices?

It is important that all hon. Members retain an open mind on this subject, pending the results of the Select Committee inquiry. I very much welcome the inquiry, because the food and farming industry has absolutely nothing to hide. I am confident that that industry will adopt any reasonable measures that are suggested as a result of the inquiry. As a member of the Select Committee, I shall be especially interested to hear the evidence of some well-known publicity-seeking sensationalists. In the meantime, I have absolutely no hesitation in stating that British beef is perfectly safe to eat and that the overwhelming weight of evidence supports that view.

9.13 pm

Mr. Martyn Jones (Clwyd, South-West): Let me say at the outset that I am still eating beef—at least as far as my cholesterol level will allow. However, I am not eating products that contain mechanically recovered meat or any of the more exotic parts of the animal that masquerade as beef and that can be used at present. The few bits of the animal that are not used, or are obtained from unfit animals, are then used as animal feed to turn cows into carnivores and chickens into cannibals.

However, as I said, I am still eating red meat beef because, after reading at least some of the evidence, I can assess that evidence for myself. However, most people cannot and require the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretary of State for Health to assess the risk for them and to take every reasonable precaution.

[Mr. Martyn Jones]

As a member of the Select Committee on Agriculture, I will not prejudge its deliberations, but from the evidence that I have examined it is already obvious to me—as an interested individual—that the Ministry has not acted with wholehearted interest or with the necessary speed to protect either the farming industry or the consumer.

Mr. Martlew: Is it not true that the work of the Select Committee—of which my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones) and I are both members—has been badly damaged by the speech by the hon. Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill)? The hon. Gentleman, along with another hon. Member who spoke last Thursday, seems to have already made up his mind about the conclusions of the report. He has concluded that British beef is safe, and that the scare is all the fault of a bogus professor and a dead cat. Surely we must be more careful about what we say if we are to be regarded as independent judges.

Mr. Jones: My hon. Friend is right, and I shall try to be open minded. However, I have read much of the evidence that has already been given to the Committee, and I am convinced that so far the Ministry has not acted correctly.

On the evidence of the Ministry's own experts, the epidemic in the cattle population was caused by the bending of rules governing heat-treating of offal, sanctioned by the Government. For two years after its recognition, Ministry vets were told not to refer to the disease as "scrapie-like". On top of that, there is the compensation fiasco. What can the Ministry have been thinking of—apart from saving money—by offering 50 per cent. compensation? Bowing to pressure, the Ministry increased that to 100 per cent., and the weekly average of reported cases jumped from 278 to 460—hardly a gradual increase.

If those incidents are coupled with the bungling of the on-going salmonella food-poisoning epidemic, the listeria problem and the fears about microwave cookers, it is hardly surprising that the public do not believe the Minister or his Under-Secretary when they claim that there is no risk to humans. The public—who have not read the report by Sir Richard Southwood—can appreciate, even if the Minister cannot, the finding of the report, which says that human transmission cannot be ruled out. That is a risk, however small.

I am not a specialist in neuropathology, but the risk to humans depends on its transmissibility. We are told that scrapie has not caused a human disease, despite existing in Britain for 250 years. However, the human form of the disease—Creuzfeld-Jakob disease—was described only in 1923, and was not recognised as a transmissible disease until 1960. Possibly more worrying is the laboratory evidence, which shows that, although scrapie will not infect rabbits directly, it will infect them after infecting hamsters. That is a well-known phenomenon in micribiology. That could increase the risk, whatever it may be. No one—not even the Minister or his experts—can assess the risk; it is unassessable.

Even if the disease passes from cows to humans, we are still not facing a human epidemic. At worst, we are probably facing an increase from about 30 to 100 or so cases a year. That is because many factors involved are in the incidence of this type of disease; whether we call it a slow virus or a prion. No one knows exactly what it consists of, how it can be transmitted or how it can be detected.

It is known, however, that there are genetic and transmission factors, and there appears to be a dose-related factor, although until reseach is done on the epidemiology of Creuzfeld-Jakob disease we cannot be sure. The Minister should ask his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health to make Creuzfeld-Jakob disease notifiable, as medical opinion considers the disease to be under-reported, and there is also a possible confusion with Alzheimer's disease. The incidence of CJD must be quantified; otherwise, how can we know what—if any—increase will occur from any type of BSE-related incident?

What should we do to restore confidence? We must examine abattoir practice. We must not use the brains of cattle for any purposes. All cattle brains should be destroyed by burning within the head. We must stop offals such as brain, spleen and lymph glands being used in any animal food. We have already had a sequal to "Mad Max I"; how many more of Britain's 7 million cats must suffer and die? On 24 April the Minister said that there was no evidence of naturally occurring encephalopathies in cats and dogs. That is almost certainly true, but there have been two unnatural cases recently. It could be another case of cross-species transmission. We do not know. We face not a doomsday scenario, but a risk. It does nothing for the Government's credibility publicly to deny any risk when their experts say that there is one, albeit a small one.

BSE could be transmitted to humans. The Southwood report and the chief veterinary officer have said so. Regardless of all the discussion about risk, one fact is certain and has nothing to do with the Opposition calling the debate. It is that public confidence in beef has plummeted. That will affect farmers throughout the country, especially those in my area, who are not the richest. In 1984 they got £1·98 a kilo whereas last week a farmer was offered £1·84. Even for sheep, which are not affected by the problem, my farmers are getting £2·62, which is exactly the same as in 1984. Coupled with high interest rates and the poll tax, this is a potential disaster for farming.

Confidence must be restored. It will not be fully restored until we have a food standards agency which is genuinely independent of both Government and the food industry. Meantime, I hope that the deliberations of the Select Committee will be accepted as objective. To restore confidence to the market and to prevent farmers from suffering from a problem which is not of their own making, the Government should err on the side of caution. They should not hide behind expert advice. Advisers advise, but Ministers decide. They should immediately stop offal feeding to all animals; they should instigate random testing at abattoirs; they should prevent the possibility of vertical transmission in cattle by culling calves and infected cattle with full compensation and they should increase reseach on transmission.

I will continue to eat whole red beef, but I am not confident of some beef products. Consumers will not be confident until the Minister takes on board all the measures that we have outlined and changes many of the food processors' practices to the benefit of consumers and producers.

9.21 pm

Mr. Tim Boswell (Daventry): I must declare an interest as a layman on the Agricultural and Food Research Council. I keep a close eye on its research. I am grateful to the Government for their contribution of £12 million to it and to medical research which is essential. I also declare my interest as a beef farmer.

The Minister, properly, concentrated on consumers. He has often said that he puts consumers first. Farmers must also do so. However, this morning I had to stop my cattle going to market because of this ridiculous scare, so I think that it is fair to flag up the damage that these stories can do to legitimate businesses and a major British industry.

The Minister made a convincing case for the Government's action on the scientific advice that they receive. In so far as any of the Opposition's case remains, it centres on the alleged delay in implementation. The Minister explained why it took place, but having read round the subject I wish to make one or two points. In doing so I follow the hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones), not in his conclusions but in some of his analysis.

First, this is a brand new disease or possible complex of diseases. We have known about scrapie for some time—I have had one isolated case on my farm—but this is the first time that such a disease has cropped up in cattle and we do not even know what to call it. Is it a prion or a slow virus? We need to research that. Secondly, the period of incubation is questionable and there is no possibility of diagnosis in a live animal. If we had that possibility, life would be a great deal easier. Thirdly, it is clear by analogy that the disease is not highly infectious because mostly there have been one or two cases in a herd. Similarly, although scrapie in sheep is more concentrated in some breeds than others, cases are sporadic and intermittent. Fourthly, there seems to be little evidence of transmission across species, except in rather artificial conditions, such as some which have been mentioned.

The complexity of the difficulties now faced by the Minister are also revealed by the fact that BSE has given rise to the rediagnosis of a series of events that had simply been left to go on the nod in the past. I understand that the Americans are re-examining 80 cases of bovine rabies and I would not be at all surprised to find cases of BSE on the continent that are now dismissed as rabies. There may well be other examples of BSE in Britain—we have already had it diagnosed in a cat—that were not diagnosed in the past because no one thought to investigate that possible diagnosis.

The Minister must not only protect the public, but he must not go off at half-cock before the necessary information and advice is available to him. Hon. Members will be aware that certain debates are going on now concerning the Food Safety Bill and it is proposed that further compensation should be provided if local authorities seize food without justification. One can imagine the situation in which the Minister could find himself if he closed down the livestock industry—that appears to be the logic behind some Opposition speeches —without proper justification. That decision would never stand up in court and the compensation would be immense.

It has been difficult for the Minister to feel his way forward. but he has struck the right balance. There are certain points that I should like him to bear in mind. First, we know that enforcement is always difficult and we must ensure that regulations and advice are heeded. The enforceability of a full notification and tracing process for calves of infected animals after some years have elapsed and those calves have moved to different herds is a daunting task for my right hon. Friend even if he were advised to undertake it.

Secondly, there is a major need for greater public education not least because education committees, including, I am ashamed to say, my county's, have decided to proceed often on political rather than scientific grounds. They have second-guessed the advice, that the Minister has received. If those committees have better advice, by all means submit it to my right hon. Friend, but so far their approach has not been scientific.

I was slightly surprised to see a reference to the danger of eating meat pies by no less a distinguished person than the medical correspondent of *The Times*. He referred to that danger because brain and spinal tissue are used in those pies. That is a surprising comment in view of the safeguards that the Minister has imposed.

My third point relates specifically to my constituency and the tip site at Welford, which has now been closed. Carcases have been buried at that site, but I strongly prefer incineration, which is more positive and final.

My right hon. Friend should also consider the possibility of epidemiological studies of ordinary carcases and brains taken from the slaughterhouses. Although that is a one-star priority, the fact that one would be dealing with such large numbers means that there would be no bias in the sample and a small number would provide a good statistical reading that one could use with confidence.

The Government have expressed their readiness to keep reminding the public of what they are doing, to publish the information that they have and to consider new information when it becomes available—in that they have met my request. There is an equal duty on the Opposition not to stir things up with inappropriate scares. If the issues are real, they should be brought forward, but Opposition Members should avoid using words such as "could", "might", or "no absolute assurance" because they are not synonymous with a realistic and balanced approach to the problem.

With the possible exception of my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), no one else in the Chamber will remember the foot and mouth epidemic of 1967, which devastated the dairying areas of the north-west. I was then a junior researcher for the Conservative party and there was then a great deal of pressure on Conservative Members, then the Opposition, to attack the Government. Those pressures were firmly and rigorously resisted, and rightly so. No party that aspires to be in Government should stir up criticism in that way. The Government have acted responsibly in this matter. They have taken the best advice, which is good enough for me and, I hope, the House.

9.30 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I recollect that Mr. Fred Peart, as he then was, was seriously criticised in 1967. The recollection of some of us is not what the hon. Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) said.

I have three questions. First, is it or is it not true that the cuts in the Agricultural and Food Research Council have been something of a hindrance in the present crisis?

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

Secondly, are the Government going to bring forward legislation fairly soon involving the changes in abattoirs? The Minister referred to the *New Scientist*. There is a powerful six-page article on the issue of stunning and what that can do to meat. In 15 seconds I cannot go into it, but I ask that question. Thirdly, my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) has had some difficulty with his information, which I believe is absolutely valid. What are the instructions given to people working in Government employment in relation to making statements? That is something that should be coolly contemplated.

9.32 pm

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): I am disappointed that the hon. Members for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague) and for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler), who have been in the Chamber throughout the evening, have not had the opportunity to speak. I know that they have both followed the debate closely, but that is the way the cookie crumbles.

The latter point of the hon. Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) was answered fully by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), who made clear the attitude of the then Opposition in 1967. The hon. Members for Daventry and for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) criticised the Opposition for tabling the motion. They seemed to imply, as my hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) made clear, that we had no right to table a motion criticising the Government. I reject that view because I resent it. The Opposition have every right to table such a motion. I would suggest to anyone——

Mr. Gill *rose*——

Mr. Davies: I shall not give way because time is short and the hon. Gentleman has made his case. I must now make mine.

We tabled our motion, which was critical of the Government. No Opposition Member has said anything to impugn the integrity of the beef industry or cast any doubt on the wisdom of eating beef. If that is construed as an attack on the beef industry, I am sorry. But our motion specifically attacks the Government's handling of the present problem of BSE, which is the issue that I want to address.

The hon. Member for Ludlow asked why we should debate this matter this evening. I received a parliamentary answer today stating that, during the past four weeks, 1,148 cases of BSE have been confirmed. Every county in England and Wales during the past four weeks has had confirmed cases of BSE. That alone is a good reason to debate the issue this evening. If the hon. Gentleman had looked at the press last week he would have seen that there is major public concern. It is right that if every newspaper in the country draws attention to what is clearly a major problem and local authorities throughout the land—Conservative, Labour, Liberal and hung—decide that there is sufficient concern——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman *rose*——

Mr. Davies: I shall not give way to the hon. Lady. She has been in and out all evening, and if she cannot listen to the debate, I am sorry.

Authorities across the political spectrum have decided, rightly or wrongly, that they want to ban beef in their schools. That is a matter of concern to me and, I know, to my hon. Friends, and that is why we tabled the motion.

I do not know what was the experience of the hon. Members for Daventry and for Ludlow during the weekend, but I know that they both have close interests with the farming industry and are both, I believe, former members of the National Farmers Union. I talked to several farmers in my constituency at the weekend. They all recognised that the major problem they currently face —admittedly, they were involved in dairy and stock rearing—is BSE. They want action and are not satisfied with the description that we have so far received from the Minister. The widespread opinion outside the House is a good reason why we should debate this matter and examine the Government's record.

Let us look at the case that the Minister made out when opening the debate. His case hinged on the idea that the Government are committed to acting on—and only on —that which has been scientifically proven. I happen to think that that is a faulty approach. Of course, the Government must listen and accept scientific evidence and advice, but their responsbility is to interpret that advice and then to apply it in practice at the political level, just as they did in the case of green top milk. The Government must understand that the public will make their own assessment of the risks involved with BSE, and if the public perception is that the safeguards implemented by the Government are insufficient they will take their own action —as they have.

The Government cannot determine policy in a vacuum. The likely public reaction to their initiatives, such as they are, must inform Government policy. A wilful disregard of the developing public mood in relation to food safety, in concert with the ritualistic recital of the words "scientific evidence", is bound to inflame, rather than calm, public concern: hence the report in *The Sunday Telegraph* yesterday that six out of 10 people questioned now believe that the Government are withholding information on BSE.

The Government's reference to scientific evidence is itself disingenuous. Lack of hard scientific evidence that BSE poses a threat is not the same as saying that we have scientific evidence that it is not a threat. It may be instructive for those who listen to the words of scientists and advisers to hear what is said in the article in *The Independent* of Thursday 17 May:

"A recent editorial in the *British Medical Journal* concluded: 'Repeated claims that British beef is entirely safe to eat are very probably true; but such claims are scarcely scientific when the question has not been tested and is, perhaps, untestable.'

The editorial was written by Professor Bryan Matthews, who is one of the country's leading experts on the human disease Creuzfeld-Jakob Disease, which shows some similarity to BSE."

That is not a source to be dismissed lightly.

The Minister would have us believe that because we do not know that BSE affects humans, or that it is vertically transmitted, or that it is present in calves of less than six months of age, BSE cannot affect humans, cannot be vertically transmitted and cannot be present in calves of less than six months. That approach is dishonest.

In the absence of firm scientific proof, the Government must make an assessment of what could possibly happen. I am grateful that the Minister, when intervening in the

speech of the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor), made the welcome statement that he was prepared to consider the worst scenario. That is the first time he has made that admission in public——

Mr. Gummer *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Davies: The Minister might have said it in private, but I welcome the fact that he has gone on public record with it this evening. Evidence of the action that he has taken to date shows that he has not adopted that line hitherto.

The Government must assess what could possibly happen and frame a reasonable political response. Their failure to do so in the past 10 years has been the principal cause of the current crisis in public confidence in our beef industry. For example, in the early 1960s it was a scientifically established fact that scrapie was transmissible, and it was known that that took place by ingestion. There was, however, no scientific proof that cattle could catch the bovine equivalent of scrapie. That position was exactly analogous to that which applies to humans now. The lack of scientific evidence did not prevent the feeding of scrapie-infected remains to cattle, causing the emergence of BSE.

It is because the public are worried that the lack of scientific evidence will not prevent the same thing happening to humans that we have this crisis on our hands. After all, why should the public accept Government assurances that all is well? Had the Government been asked in the early 1980s about the practice of feeding vegetarian cattle on sheep, no doubt they would have said that it was perfectly acceptable. It turned out not to be, but because of the lack of scientific evidence at the time they kept on allowing dead sheep to be fed to vegetarian cattle.

The Minister spoke recently about what is and what is not natural in terms of diet. I am not sure about the credibility of a man who invokes biblical authority one week and requires binding scientific proof the next. The Minister has said that if God had meant man to be a vegetarian he would have given him three stomachs like a cow. The theology is dubious and the biology is worse because a cow has four stomachs. Because the Minister did not have scientific evidence—not biblical guidance—that this was dangerous, he continued to allow what is, by his own standards, the very unnatural practice of feeding dead cows to vegetarian cattle.

It is little wonder that no one now takes the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food seriously. At every point of the developing saga the Ministry has been found wanting. The Ministry knew 20 years ago that scrapie was transmissible by ingestion to other species but it did nothing. It knew in 1985 that cattle were being stricken and it covered that up. It knew in 1987 about a scientific paper intended to refer to a scrapie-like disease in cattle and censored it. It must have suspected in 1987 that contaminated feed was the problem and it did nothing until August 1988. The Ministry must have realised early on the potential risk to humans. The Southwood committee confirmed it in February 1989, but the very offals which were the reservoir of infection were not banned until November 1989.

After 1988 when the disease was made notifiable the Ministry must have known that infected animals were being slaughtered for human consumption. On the Minister's own figures, 200 infected animals were plucked from slaughterhouses. If 200 were plucked out, how many went through? Farmers, veterinary surgeons and public health inspectors told the Government what was happening, but we had to wait until February this year when the Minister swapped the pulpit for the soap box. He went to the National Farmers Union conference and, to curry favour with the NFU and because he had precious little else to say, he increased the level of compensation by 200 per cent. He knows that he should have taken that measure at the outset because it would have stopped infected cattle entering the human food chain.

The Minister has shown similar scant regard for the health of workers in the industry. He still has not revised the practices for the handling of potentially infected bovine remains in slaughterhouses. The Government's action on health and safety guidelines and the monitoring of the guidelines on the human equivalent, Creuzfeld-Jakob dementia, which came last month, three or four years after the Government knew about the start of the problem, were, in the words of my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields, too little too late.

The Minister may argue that that is wisdom with the benefit of hindsight. However, it represents the difference between what the Government have done and what Labour would do. The difference is between the minimum that the Government think they can get away with and that which we know is necessary to achieve and maintain minimum standards. The Minister has a steep hill to climb, and although I do not expect him to apologise for his past mistakes, we do expect him to take positive action to improve the outlook.

Why will not the Minister accept random sampling? The hon. Member for Daventry, who is an expert, and the hon. Member for Warrington, South, if he had spoken, would have joined us in calling for random sampling. The Minister has not given an answer to that and I hope that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will answer the question: why does not the Minister require compulsory ante-mortem veterinary inspection of all bovines? He will be required to do that under EEC rules by January 1991 anyway. Why does he not bring it forward six months? If the Minister wants to restore public confidence in the beef industry, he should order that from tomorrow all cattle must be examined before slaughter. The Minister will not do that because he realises that there have been deficiencies in his policy for the past couple of years.

Why will not the Minister ban the use of specified offals in pet food and pig and poultry supplements? His explanation to date is that there is no example of scrapie having infected carnivorous animals. We are told that the Bible tells us that carnivores are naturally equipped to deal with scrapie. What about the cat that has scrapie? That is a carnivore. How can the Minister tell us that a cat can catch it but a pig or a chicken cannot. They are consuming what the Minister knows to be contaminated foodstuffs. If he wants to restore confidence in the British beef industry, he should now be taking such decisions.

Many hon. Members have spoken about monitoring the offspring of infected cattle. This crucial subject last week had the support of the president of the NFU and still has the continuing support of the Women's Farming Union. If BSE is the cattle equivalent of scrapie, all the characteristics in cattle will be the same as those in sheep

[Mr. Davies]

with scrapie, and BSE will be vertically transmissible. The Minister must accept that there is a strong possibility that it is vertically transmissible.

Any Minister who knew of this matter when he knew of the problem of BSE two or three years ago would have said, as a matter of first policy, that if there is a possibility of BSE being vertically transmissible, although the Ministry would not go the whole way and slaughter every calf, it should at least start recording the movement of calves. Then, if it were so proved, the Ministry would know where the calves are and have the records to deal with the problem. As the Minister admitted to me on Friday last week, not only does he not know where they are; he does not know how many calves alive today were born from BSE-infected cattle. That is a shoddy record, and that is why we tabled the motion.

9.46 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr David Maclean): This has been an interesting debate, not least because it has exposed those on the Opposition Benches who will seek to exploit public fear for political aims. The intemperate outburst that we heard at the end was a clear demonstration of that.

The debate has put the labour party on the spot. First, it has had to justify having the debate at all. No wonder so many Labour Back Benchers are questioning the judgment of the leader of the Labour party when he takes up one half of his precious Supply day for a debate on Ravenscraig and the other he devotes to this subject when the questions about it were fully answered last Thursday in the detailed statement on it by my right hon. Friend the Minister, numerous press releases and over 30 learned reports and publications, all in the public domain. The people of Scotland will not understand a Labour party that prefers to damage the Scotch beef industry rather than argue for jobs at Ravenscraig.

The Labour party must also justify, although it has not, its refusal to rely on the expert scientific advice of the Government's top independent scientific advisers. We have based our policy on that advice, and in its motion condemning the Government, it is condemning that advice. The Labour party has said that it knows better and would have done it differently, but on which scientific advice would it rely? It has produced not one shred of evidence or argument to show that there is better scientific advice that we have not used.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Has not Professor Lacey of Leeds grossly harmed the egg industry by an irresponsible campaign, and is he not now claiming to be an expert on this subject? Has Professor Lacey produced any in-depth scientific papers that have been subjected to the peer scrutiny that they so urgently require?

Mr. Maclean: I am not aware of any on this subject, but it is over a week since I called on Professor Lacey to say whether he has any evidence that he wishes to submit to our experts, or any advice on certain subjects about which he knows better. We have an open mind on this, and we keep all aspects of BSE policy under review. If anyone comes to us with any research, we will immediately pass it to Dr. Tyrrell and his experts for their advice. The Opposition rely on Dr. Lacey and the media, who, as I understand it, have done no research. We shall rely on Dr. Tyrrell and his experts, who have.

The hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) dismissed the views of the chief medical officer. No doubt Sir Donald Acheson is now persona non grata among the Opposition because he committed the fatal mistake of saying:

> "I therefore have no hesitation in saying that British beef can be eaten safely by everyone, both adults and children, including patients in hospital."

That is why Opposition Members would not mention Sir Donald in tonight's debate.

The hon. Member for Carmarthen said that the incidence of the disease is higher than Southwood predicted, but failed to point out that the disease is following the path predicted by Southwood. The hon. Gentleman and others make the assumption that BSE has jumped species. That is the kind of scaremongering that my hon. Friends mean when they accuse the Opposition of scaremongering. According to the Opposition, if a form of encephalopathy is found in a cat, automatically it must be BSE. The hon. Member for Carmarthen called for the mass slaughter of cows, even though the expert evidence is against it. The hon. Gentleman dodged that point. The chief veterinary officer does not support the mass extermination of cows.

The hon. Member for Carmarthen also made the allegation that the temperature at which carcases are rendered has been lowered. I refer him to the Southwood report, which details in its final pages the various rendering processes that are available and reveals that the temperature for rendering has not been lowered.

My hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Boscawen) was right to remind the Opposition that they should give any evidence they have to the Tyrrell committee. He was right also to accuse the Opposition of being irresponsible.

I welcome the contribution of the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor), who agrees with our statement that the risk to humans is distant. I support his closing remark, that British beef is safe. He asked me about the labelling of feeding stuffs. As I said in the House last Thursday, the draft EEC directive on the labelling of feeding stuffs was agreed last January. The Government have not refused to introduce the regulations, but want to implement them in concert with our European partners. We are working on the detail of the regulations now. They will be a matter not for the Food Safety Bill but for the feeding stuffs regulations.

The hon. Member for Truro accepts the scientific advice generally, but asks us to ignore it in respect of pigs and poultry. The hon. Gentleman accepts advice to undertake research into one area, but rejects advice that other research should not be extended or begun.

Opposition Members make the assumption that cats have contracted BSE from pet food. I repeat: we have followed the best advice, but if further advice or information is available, I am sure that Dr. Tyrrell will bring it to our attention. I am glad that the hon. Member for Truro distanced himself from the mass slaughtering claims. We keep records of calves, and we will ensure that records of diseased animals will be kept for many years. We have acknowledged the possibility of maternal

transmission, and do not work on the assumption that it will never occur. If it does, we have the safeguards in place to deal with it.

Heads are removed from animal carcases before the splitting of them for the extraction of head meat. Again, because we have an open mind, we will happily take any further advice that Tyrrell may give. It is right to keep an open mind when it comes to dealing with head splitting.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) was also right to criticise the Opposition for creating newspaper headlines that, inadvertently or otherwise, cause food scares. The Opposition claim that they are not doing that deliberately, in which case I accuse them of a worse crime—that of total ignorance. My hon. Friend is right to insist that decisions are made on soundly based advice, which is our policy and that of our predecessors. A former Agriculture Minister urged to eliminate TB said, in the European context:

"We also wanted to ensure that the proposed Community action against swine fever was soundly based and that we should not have to introduce methods for eradicating bovine tuberculosis and brucellosis which were different from those we already use, other than for sound scientific reasons."—[*Official Report*, 11 May 1977; Vol. 931, col. 1502.]

Who said that? They are the words of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) when he was an agriculture spokesman in the last Labour Government. All we are seeking is to ensure that our policy also is soundly based.

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): I am grateful to the Minister for giving way. He will agree that we can assure the public that British beef can be eaten with confidence.

Mr. Maclean: I agree entirely. I can give that assurance. My right hon. Friend the Minister, the hon. Member for Truro and the chief medical officer have given that assurance.

The Government's policy is based on the best scientific advice available. Our safety precautions are like my famous belt and two pairs of braces. First, we destroy all the cows with BSE and do spot checks in markets and abattoirs. The ultimate precaution is that we cut out the brain, spinal cord and other specified offal from every cow in the slaughterhouse to be ultra-safe. That is going further than the experts recommended. That is a belt-and-two-pairs-of-braces approach, and that is why we can say that British beef is safe.

The Opposition like to give the impression of an epidemic of unprecedented proportions ravaging through the land. Since the disease started, we have killed more than 13,000 cows in three years. When we were in the middle of the brucellosis eradication scheme and the TB eradication scheme, we were killing 30,000 and 50,000 animals each year. The extent of the disease should be kept in proportion.

The Opposition say, "Too little, too late." That is their usual line. If they continue to maintain it, they must explain why they would fly in the face of the expert advice of Professor Southwood and his committee and Dr. Tyrrell and his committee. I notice that they have precious little to say about the pronouncement by the chief medical officer that British beef is safe. They will not talk about it, because the CMO has shot their fox. They are not sure whether to imply that beef is not safe in the hope that it will gain them votes, or to say that we should do more to stop the panic that they stirred up in the first place in the hope that that will gain them votes.

The Opposition have been tabling questions trying to create a scare about pigs with bad legs in Yorkshire. They claim that we were secretive. The reason why they knew about the pigs was that they obtained the information from the press, which in turn obtained it from us. The press showed interest days before they started tabling questions. Giving information to the press is a mighty funny way to keep a secret.

Here are 27 reports, listed by the Southwood committee, on BSE; here is the Tyrrell report; and here are the countless press releases and statistics on BSE that we have issued. *Hansard* records the hundreds of written answers that I have given.

The present scare took off not because of any new BSE risk or because health was in jeopardy but because we published information on a cat with encephalopathy. We have nothing to hide and the public have nothing to fear, but they must reach their own judgment on the evidence.

Everything that should have been done has been done. Everything that can be done is being done. If we find that something should be done, it will be done, as throughout this saga, on the basis of the best scientific advice available. We will not take action based on emotion, political expediency or guesswork. This disease is too important to be treated in such a silly way as the Labour party would have us do. Its behaviour throughout, as it has tried to stir up one food scare after another, and its misjudgment in having the debate today show that it is not fit for government, and its refusal to back the judgment of Professor Southwood, Dr. Tyrrell and their independent experts exposes the shallowness of its thoughts. Worst of all, by ignoring the words of Sir Donald Acheson, the chief medical officer, who said

"I therefore have no hesitation in saying that beef can be eaten safely by everyone",

the Labour party has condemned itself as a party of cynical opportunists, twisting and turning with every move of the opinion polls. How many votes does the Labour party expect to get out of this sordid little episode?

The Government, on the other hand, have taken the honourable position throughout to safeguard public health. Despite the clear evidence of top independent experts that the risk to humans is remote, and despite the historical evidence of the past 250 years of no danger to humans from scrapie in sheep, the Government have not taken any chances. That is why I urge the House to vote against the Opposition's motion and to back the Government.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 160, Noes 316.

Division No. 218] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Bidwell, Sydney
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*	Blair, Tony
Allen, Graham	Boateng, Paul
Alton, David	Bradley, Keith
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Armstrong, Hilary	Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Ashton, Joe	Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Buchan, Norman
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*	Buckley, George J.
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*	Caborn, Richard
Barron, Kevin	Callaghan, Jim
Beckett, Margaret	Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Bell, Stuart	Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Canavan, Dennis
Bermingham, Gerald	Cartwright, John

Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Lambie, David
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum A.
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McLeish, Henry
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Quin, Ms Joyce
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Vaz, Keith
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beith, A. J.
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
McCrindle, Robert
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick

McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alastair Goodlad and
Mr. Tony Durant.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments):—*

The House divided: Ayes 272, Noes 92.

Division No. 219] **[10.14 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Browne, John *(Winchester)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(North Norfolk)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael

McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stokes, Sir John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. Nicholas Baker.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Armstrong, Hilary
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hardy, Peter
Haynes, Frank
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Illsley, Eric
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd S W)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McAvoy, Thomas
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McLeish, Henry
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Patchett, Terry
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Quin, Ms Joyce
Reid, Dr John
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Sedgemore, Brian
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Strang, Gavin
Vaz, Keith
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Winnick, David

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Andrew Welsh and
Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones.

Question accordingly agreed to.

MR. SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House supports the Government's determination to eradicate bovine spongiform encephalopathy; and commends Her Majesty's Government for basing its policy and actions to secure the safety of food on the best scientific advice and for the prompt implementation of the recommendations of its independent expert committees as the best means of safeguarding public and animal health.

Social Charter

[Relevant document: Un-numbered explanatory memorandum submitted by the Department of Employment on 24 November 1989 on a Community charter of fundamental rights.]

10.26 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Mr. Tim Eggar): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 9978/89 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department of Employment on 15th March 1990 relating to Commission action programme relating to the implementation of the Social Charter; and endorses the Government's view that a key factor in ensuring that the achievement of the single market has a social dimension is to continue efforts to stimulate job creation and bring down unemployment.

Tonight's debate focuses on the European Commission's proposal for an action programme to implement the social charter. However, the issues go wider than that. The debate raises the question of the sort of Europe that we are seeking to build, and how we can ensure that that Europe can best serve the interests of its people. The debate is an opportunity to set out the United Kingdom's position on the social action programme in the context of the challenges faced by Britain and her Community partners.

A key challenge that faces the Community is the growth of international competition. Europe is a trading community: it simply cannot survive through protectionism or state subsidy. The Community must compete with Japan, north America and the fast-growing economies of the far east. At the same time, it must be attractive as a market for inward investment. In Europe, we also face the challenges of major demographic and technological change. The Community must respond to all those challenges, and the single European market in 1992 is our major response. It holds out the prospect of new prosperity for the people of the Community.

At the Madrid European Council in June last year, all Community countries agreed that achieving the single market offered the best prospect for improving living standards and working conditions and creating new jobs within the Community. However, there are some differences of view within the Community—and within individual countries—when it comes to the so-called "social dimension". Some fear that more intense competition will lead to pressure on businesses to reduce standards in terms and conditions of employment, and therefore conclude that the Community needs a wide-ranging programme of regulation on employment and social issues. In response, the Commission has produced the social charter and the social action programme to implement the "social dimension". The British Government—like Europe's employers—take a different view. We believe that the first requirement for the "social dimension" is for action at Community level to increase the prospects for existing jobs and for the creation of new ones.

Community countries agreed at the European Council last June that the creation of jobs for the people of Europe is our top priority. It is not hard to understand why the Council decided that: about 14 million people are still unemployed in the European Community, including more than 7 million who have been unemployed for a year or more. That is the crucial issue in the "social dimension", because throughout the Community it is the unemployed whose living standards are the lowest. That view is firmly borne out by the United Kingdom experience.

By following a policy of deregulation, devolution and decentralisation, Britain has set one of the best records on jobs in the Community. Employment is at record levels; we have one of the lowest unemployment rates in the Community; and we have succeeded in cutting long-term unemployment by about half compared with the total two years ago. It is because of our record on creating jobs that we oppose measures from the Community that might increase costs, create barriers to employment and prevent jobs from being created.

That is why we believe that the social charter is unnecessary and that the social action programme to implement it could imperil the success of the single market —the engine of job creation—with restrictive and unnecessary regulations that are in nobody's interests, least of all the 14 million unemployed people in the Community.

The real social dimension is not about regulation, but about raising people's living standards and levels of prosperity through job creation throughout the Community.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Surely the social dimension has everything to do with regulation. If there is to be a single market—the Government wholeheartedly concur with it—who will regulate it? The labour market is part of the social dimension. If we are talking about a labour market, surely the Minister should talk about the regulation of the social market, which in our terms is industrial relations legislation. Although I agree that the level of employment is a significant social factor, is not the regulation of the social market of great importance to a single market economy?

Mr. Eggar: In view of the hon. Gentleman's beliefs, surely he accepts that where there must be regulation, for example in industrial relations, it is right to regulate at national rather than Community level. The Community has a role in other areas, an obvious one of which is health and safety. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not demur from that. Given the freedom of workers in the Community to work in any country, they should expect the same standards as exist in their country to apply wherever they work. Clearly, that is an area of competence which is rightly the Commission's.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Where do migrant workers stand with regard to freedom to move from one Community country to another? Will they have the same right to move or will Turkish gastarbeiter be confined to the Federal Republic of Germany and north African workers to France? As many of them will have spent many years in Germany or France, will they have the same right to move freely within the Community?

Mr. Eggar: The answer is that we do not know because we have not yet seen the directives of the Commission. We must wait for them. At the moment that matter is left to national Governments. We strongly believe in the idea of subsidiarity—not doing things at the Community level that are best done at national level. We will almost inevitably argue that the matter should be left to national

[Mr. Eggar]

Governments. However, we are not making up our mind now in advance of seeing the specific directives. I am sure that the House and the Select Committee on European Legislation, chaired by the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), will examine them.

When viewed against the criteria that I have outlined the Commission's social action programme is worrying. It represents the Commission's view of the proposals needed to implement the social charter. The programme does not include the proposals themselves, nor much detail as to what the individual proposals are likely to include.

About 47 proposals are to be considered, alongside existing Community business, in the next two years. The House will understand that that is a formidable legislative agenda. We will consider on their merits all the proposals that come forward and apply to them the test of the three criteria that were agreed at the Madrid Council. Will the proposal encourage the creation of jobs for the people of Europe? If it will, is action at Community level the right level at which to take it? If it is, does the proposal respect the different national traditions and practices? To that we want to add whether the proposal, if passed, is likely to be properly and effectively implemented.

As currently presented and judged against those criteria, we believe that we will have few problems with more than a third of the 47 proposals. That third includes proposals on such things as health and safety, equal opportunities and freedom of movement. We believe that those issues are appropriate for European-wide standard setting and are likely to be consistent with the criteria that I outlined earlier. Insufficient information is currently available on a further third of the proposals on which to form a view, but we believe that we are likely to have some difficulties with the remainder.

I should like to illustrate some of the difficulties that we shall probably face. The House might like to know that the Community is considering statutory weekly and daily rest periods and perhaps a ban on night work. We wonder whether the full implications of that have been seriously considered by the Commission. Workers may not be able to work overtime, even if it is available and they want to work it. When factory workers have worked out the implications of that on the productivity deals that they have negotiated will they be willing to see those deals effectively ripped up and the financial benefits denied to them? Those are the types of issue that might have to be addressed as a result of the proposals that we expect from the Commission.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): That is the line of argument advanced by the defender of the great British paper boy. The idea is to invent something ludicrous and insist that it is up to the Community to disprove it. The Minister has suggested that night work might be banned by the Community, but that appears nowhere in any Community document, nor is it supported by any reference to speeches emanating from Europe. Where did the Minister get that example from? Did he just make it up?

Mr. Eggar: I did not just make it up—the hon. Gentleman should know me better than that.

Proposals are coming forward from the Commission that deal with the regulation of night work. The effect of those regulations may be to make it impossible to have people working at night. That is extremely serious for companies that rely on continuous working, and has all sorts of implications for industry that needs safety cover. The hon. Gentleman is putting his head in the sand if he does not understand the likely implications of the proposals that might be put forward by the Commission.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): My hon. Friend will know about the grave concern at the implications of the social charter and the action programme. As a member of the Select Committee on European Legislation I recently had the opportunity to go to Brussels and hear Mrs. Vasso Papandreou on this very subject. She is a determined lady and clearly has every intention of putting through her proposals.

In relation to the latter category—the one third of difficult matters—to which my hon. Friend referred, there are two separate questions. The first is the issue of competence and whether the Community has the power to be able to introduce these issues, which we can shunt off to the courts, although I would exercise the right of veto and have nothing to do with them. It is about time we started talking tough on that issue. I am looking to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment, who knows what I mean.

Secondly, subsidiarity is a double-edged sword. I invite the Minister to consider the following question. If the definition—to which he rightly applied his question—is that that which is best done at local level should be done there, and that which is best done at the higher level should be done there, and the Commission has decided that it is going to abrogate to itself the higher level because it thinks that is best, how does his argument equate with the timetable for the inter-governmental conference when questions related to subsidiarity will be determined? Can he give any idea of the timetable that will be followed so that we know where we are before we go any further with this programme?

Mr. Eggar: My hon. Friend raised a number of complex and inter-related questions.

Mr. Cash: They were simple.

Mr. Eggar: If they were so simple, my hon. Friend took quite a long time to explain a few simple propositions.

These are difficult issues that must be considered in the light of the specific proposals from the Commission, and we shall have to make up our minds how to tackle each directive and proposal as it comes forward. I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention, and I am sorry that I cannot give him a fuller answer.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): To clarify the issue, which is obviously becoming complex, will the Minister answer the following question: if the Community puts forward a proposal to ban night or day work, or anything else, and it is passed with a majority, do we simply have to implement that decision whether or not Parliament likes it or the Government think that it is rubbish? Is that true or not?

Mr. Eggar: I wish that matters were as simple as my hon. Friend postulates. Of course, we shall have to look at the proposals in each directive. My hon. Friend will not be surprised to learn that one of the questions we shall consider is the system of voting that applies—whether

there is unanimity and which article it comes under. In the light of that we would argue the merits of the case. But if we believed that the proposal from the Commission was covered by the wrong article and, therefore, a different voting system—a qualified majority rather than unanimity—we would never exclude the possibility of taking the matter to the European Court, with all the implications that that has. My hon. Friend will not be at all surprised to hear me say that.

The Commission may also bring forward a proposal to regulate part-time and temporary work, which it apparently regards as atypical work. Perhaps the Commission is unaware that 6 million people in Britain work part time, and that 90 per cent. of them do so because they want to, not because they have to. We must question the motivation behind the Commission's attempt to introduce a proposal that might reduce the number of part-time jobs in the British economy.

We want to help to build a forward and outward-looking Community which can seize new opportunities and meet new challenges. We are not opposed to regulation in itself but we are strongly opposed to unnecessary regulation that burdens businesses and therefore destroys jobs. Regulation is not what the social dimension is about. The social dimension must not be about protecting traditional working patterns at the expense of jobs for unemployed people. The social dimension that we need in the Community is one that will encourage enterprise and opportunity for people to make choices about their own working lives. If we burden the Community's industry with new and unnecessary regulation in the name of the social dimension, we shall negate the single market and, in so doing, undermine job creation and hence the living standards of all our citizens.

10.47 pm

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): Once again we have heard an analysis from the Department of Employment school of fantasy of all that is ill in the European Community—particularly the Minister's absurd suggestion that the Community might ban night work at some stage. I suspect that that may come as a surprise to people working in the medical services throughout Europe who are, by definition almost, engaged in night work. It is inconceivable that people in Europe will want to do without night nurses or doctors——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Or bobbies.

Mr. Lloyd: Or bobbies, as my hon. Friend——

Mr. Skinner: To check up on the Minister at night.

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend——

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman may not be aware that a proposal that may well emerge from the Commission is that everyone be entitled to 12 hours rest a day and at least 36 hours rest a week, in an uninterrupted mode. Cannot he conceive of circumstances in which that might make it impossible to have night cover in hospitals?

Mr. Lloyd: If the Minister seriously suggests that there might be pressure that would threaten night work in hospitals, he is living in a peculiar world inhabited only by the small group of people who voted against the social charter—the British Conservative group and the French communists, a fairly unique combination.

Mr. Eggar: Stop wriggling.

Mr. Lloyd: I am not wriggling; I am happy to debate night work with the Minister through the night, here or in the many places in which night work will continue in future.

It was a sign of ministerial desperation that the Minister should once again pick on the trivial. This is the same Minister who gave us the spectre of the disappearing paper boys. Even the Minister would concede that not only was that nonsense then but that it is nonsense now. There was never anything serious in that, just as there was nothing serious in what the Minister said in the debate. His speech consisted of the usual tired old slogans, such as the Government are in control of unemployment. We learnt on Thursday that unemployment has increased. Would the Minister care to intervene again and tell the House when he next expects unemployment not to go up? Obviously he does not feel confident enough to speak about that. Will it be next month or the month after, or will it be next year? Does he have any views at all on when unemployment in Britain will begin to fall again? He does not think that that is important.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lloyd: Of course I will, if the hon. Gentleman proposes to answer that question.

Mr. Butterfill: Can the hon. Gentleman tell us when under a Labour Government we had 43 months of an uninterrupted fall in unemployment?

Mr. Lloyd: I would take that question seriously if the hon. Gentleman could give me a clear indication of when unemployment will fall to the level at which it stood when the Government came to office. That is a much more serious question because unemployment in Britain is still far above the level at which it stood when the Prime Minister came to Downing street.

Mr. Butterfill *rose*——

Mr. Lloyd: I shall not give way because the hon. Gentleman has yet to make a serious point.

The Opposition have a much more serious but much more relaxed view of the action programme. Nobody could seriously say that of itself the action programme is anything other than a greatly watered down version of the original social charter. I am sure Conservative Members will want to pay tribute to the Prime Minister for that because she made determined efforts to ensure that there is no semblance of a social framework within which people in Britain or in the wider Community can work. The cost of that will not be suffered by ex Cabinet Ministers, present Ministers or Conservative Members until they become unemployed at the next general election. It is suffered by ordinary people throughout Europe. The cost will be borne not just by the 14 million unemployed people that the Minister mentioned, but by the millions who will have to endure deplorable working conditions that are imposed throughout Europe and in Britain by the Government.

The Minister says that the Government are seriously pursuing the benefits of the single market. Let us examine the impact of the single market. Louvain university recently carried out a study into regions of traditional industry. The two in Britain that were examined were south Yorkshire and Strathclyde and the study concluded

[Mr. Lloyd]

that the future in the single market for both regions was extremely grim unless there was some countervailing move by the Government. There was no suggestion that of itself the single market would produce a magic overnight dividend. The study said that unregulated competitive pressures in the market would be greatly to the disadvantage of those traditional regions. The Minister frowns. I am surprised that he does not know about this study.

Another study by Professor Amin Rajan was published by the Industrial Society. It suggests that the United Kingdom would have to bear the loss of about 200,000 jobs in the single market unless action was taken to stem that. That is out of a total of 500,000 jobs that would be lost throughout the Community. That is the potential of the single market and it will be realised unless there is some countervailing action by Governments and action by the Community.

Let us look at the rise of the European company, in which I presently have a constituency interest. The Minister said that such matters are best left to national Governments and I think that he mentioned collective bargaining.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Will the hon Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lloyd: I shall do so in a moment.

Perhaps Conservative Members have already dismissed the rise of European companies. I mentioned today an announcement made by a company that operates in my constituency, GEC-Alsthom, which has declared 180 redundancies. At least some of those have come about since the merger of GEC with the French company Alsthom. The joint company has decided to transfer some activities from Trafford Park in Manchester to France. The result, of course, is job losses.

At least one of the reasons why that could happen is that France has statutory rights to information and consultation that do not exist here. The first that the work force in my constituency knew about this was today, when the company announced its decision to the world. The fact that our workers do not have the protection of a right to information or consultation puts them at a serious disadvantage in the competitive decisions being made by the new Euro-companies.

We need a framework of European action, not to supplant national legislation or collective bargaining, but to recognise that, at the level of the Euro-company, national legislation and collective bargaining simply will not control what happens. In the context of GEC, collective bargaining proved irrelevant.

Mr. Hind: In what way would the social charter, and the directives that will follow it, stop the loss of jobs foreseen in the Louvain study, as a consequence of the implementation of the single market in 1992? Surely all that the social charter will do is to increase the costs of industry and make competitive factors much more important, so the desire to get rid of jobs will be greater rather than less.

Mr. Lloyd: This is what the Government frequently refer to as the level playing field. Is the hon. Gentleman seriously suggesting that we should compete with Portugal, with a minimum working age of 14, or Greece, with a minimum working age of 12? He should understand why I feel that we cannot compete on those terms. In the example that I gave in my constituency, the company did not have to give information because legislation does not force it to do so on a European-wide basis, and such legislation would have made a difference to the loss of 180 jobs in my constituency.

The European Community has already had an impact on domestic legislation. The Government have been forced through the European Court on a number of occasions —for example, on legislation enforcing sexual equality, particularly at work. The Equal Pay Act 1970 was amended by the Equal Pay (Amendment) Regulations 1983 to introduce the concept of equal pay for equal work, because of such a move. The Sex Discrimination Act 1975 was also amended as a result of the European Court ruling. With a Conservative Government who are determined to push back the rights of workers in Britain, it is important that we have some framework to offer more than they are prepared to offer.

For example, the document says:

"The fact remains however that the difficulties encountered on the labour market have led to the development of wages practices which no longer afford those concerned a decent standard of living."

That is addressed to Britain. One in five people in the north-west are low paid by any definition, and in my area of Greater Manchester, two in five are low paid, and the bulk of the low paid are women. The Government have no intention of doing anything about low pay. It is still something of a mystery to me why they did not abolish the wages councils—we all know that that is their real intent, and the Minister has not made any secret about it.

The action programme will give a framework within which a Labour Government can bring in a minimum wage, and we must applaud that.

Mr. Skinner: We can do that anyway.

Mr. Lloyd: Of course, there is nothing to stop a Labour Government from introducing it when they come to power, but for the next two years it is unlikely that there will be one. The Government say that they do not operate in accordance with Europe, but I have already shown how equal pay and sex discrimination legislation have been amended, unwillingly, by the Government because European legislation guarantees those minimum rights for British workers and British women at work.

If a Labour Government were in power, those provisions would have been introduced, in accordance with the original legislation that we implemented. My hon. Friend is right to say that there is nothing in the measure that would stop a Labour Government going further, but there is nothing to prevent the present Government from further worsening working conditions.

Mr. Cash: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lloyd: Not on this point.

Mr. Cash: The hon. Gentleman ought to give way.

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman does not need to lecture me on whether I should give way.

The Government are being hypocritical if they say that they take no interest in what is happening in the rest of Europe. The action programme makes particular references to training, for example. It is interesting that the

Minister did not mention that aspect, because only four to six weeks ago training was all the rage among Government Ministers. The Secretary of State for Employment was up and down like a yo-yo at press conferences and on television, extolling the virtues of the Government's training policies. The reality is that they have lost their way —so much so, we are beginning to witness again all the usual short-term phenomena and their effects on the economy, including undertraining of the British worker.

Recently, the Under-Secretary gave a parliamentary answer on average expenditure by employers on vocational training. Britain is supposed to lead the world in insurance, but it is worrying that that industry spends less on training its employees than France, Germany, and Denmark, the same as Portugal, and less than Belgium. The Minister makes no mention of what the Government will do to outdistance the rest of Europe.

The same Government are nevertheless prepared to take from the European social fund £111 million this year, to fund the YTS scheme. The Minister looks puzzled—perhaps he did not know about that. A considerable percentage of the money that funds the YTS comes from Europe. The Government unashamedly take that money, yet will not acknowledge that British training lags way behind the rest of the EEC. That is why a framework is needed to impose standards that do not currently exist.

When the Minister winds up, perhaps he will say whether he believes that the paper boy is still under threat, and that Britain is still threatened by other European countries prepared to employ youngsters who are little more than children and thus undercut British employers. I mentioned the 12-year-olds at work in Greece, and the 14-year-olds employed in Portugal, but the Minister does not want legislation to control minimum ages.

On both moral and economic grounds, it would be the height of foolishness for Britain not to support a European standard. The Minister says that Britain has no problems in that respect, but a number of proposals will be coming from the Community this year. He referred to atypical employment, and that word is used by the EEC. We have seen a massive growth in part-time working in Britain, and one consequence of that has been massive deregulation of the labour market. Workers who would have enjoyed employment protection had they been in full-time jobs do not receive it as part-time workers.

A Labour Government will introduce legislation on standards for part-time and home workers, who currently have only the most tenuous relationship with the labour market.

Mr. Eggar: Ah.

Mr. Lloyd: The Minister says, "Ah." That is most curious. Let us examine the nine out of 10 people who he says prefer part-time work. We are not opposed to part-time working and to people obtaining the kind of employment that suits their circumstances. Nevertheless, the nine out of 10 people who prefer part-time work would also like the security of pay rates and conditions that approximate to those enjoyed by full-time workers, and the kind of job security that does not currently exist.

The idea that the Minister is trying to peddle that part-time work in Thatcher's Britain offers security, decency or permanency is so ridiculous that it warrants no more than mockery. If he believes that, he should visit with me some of the sweat shops in London, or of any other major city, and ask part-time workers whether they prefer part-time work without any social conditions to prop up their employment rights.

Will the Government oppose the directives on working time, on atypical work, on proof of employment contracts or on pregnant women? Will they use the veto? The hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) posed that question and it is incumbent on the Minister to answer it. Whatever our different views, the House should know where the Government stand.

The Minister will say that it is too early to say. He said that he opposes some of the directives. If his worst fears come to fruition, will the Government oppose those directives? Will they oppose the third action programme for women? I noticed with interest that when the Minister was talking of the conditions for acceptance, he mentioned the need for subsidiarity and for maintaining national cultures. The recommendations on child care would fit all those criteria. Will the Government welcome the recommendation that is likely to be made by the Community on child care, or will they go further and implement it and begin to build the care facilities for women who want to work but cannot do so because of the lack of facilities? That is important for millions of people, in whom the Minister claims to have some interest.

I mentioned the need for and right to information and for consultation to prevent a situation such as that in my constituency, where 180 of my constituents and those of my geographical neighbours will lose their jobs. They did not know what would happen to them, although they have what would be regarded as a traditionally strong union, the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions. Despite that protection, their jobs will be lost. Will the Minister ensure that they have information to enable them to fight, through collective bargaining and the principle of negotiation, without two hands tied behind their back?

Those are the important features of the action programme. It is no panacea. It does not promise to cure our industrial and economic woes overnight, but it provides a minimum level of protection which is not provided by the Government but which any worthwhile Government would go beyond. A Labour Government will most certainly go beyond it, but if the Minister does not provide people with the minimum level of protection, all his cant about seeking to reduce unemployment and to protect people through the single market will lead to tragedy for millions in the north and throughout Britain.

11.8 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): The first point that I want to make is in respect of the timing of the debate. Fortunately, the Government have released their response to the report of the Select Committee on the Scrutiny of European Legislation. Without going into it, I simply want to draw the attention of the House to the fact that it is available in the Vote Office. It is a major step forward, because not only will we have the opportunity to consider European legislation and developments well in advance of debates but Special Standing Committees are to be set up to consider measures such as this, which we are discussing at a late hour in an almost empty House. There are other points in the Government's response that I applaud, but it is not necessary for me to go into them now.

During my altercation with my hon. Friend the Minister, we discussed whether this was a complex or a simple issue. It is complicated to deal with 47 directives and action programmes and the broad principles of the social charter, but it is hoped, and expected, that they will be considered properly by people who are versed in them because of their experience on Special Standing Committees. I hope that, at the inter-governmental conference, we will not sell the pass on the vague notion of subsidiarity, which I view with apprehension. As a political concept, it has advantages, but there will be considerable difficulties if, as a legal definition, it is incorporated in treaty amendments.

The explanatory memorandum dated 29 November was followed by a supplementary memorandum dated 6 January. Following the report on 28 March of the Select Committee on European Legislation, we have had to wait until 21 May before being able to debate it. I hope that the Government's proposals will deal with this serious problem.

Mr. Skinner: It is down to the Leader of the House.

Mr. Cash: The hon. Gentleman says that it is down to my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House. The questions must be tackled, and we must pay tribute, albeit belatedly, to the Government for the fact that the procedures will be put in motion.

The substantive issues involved in the directives are more important matters. I say without the slightest criticism of my hon. Friend the Minister that, whatever one's view on them, it is not possible in the short time available to deal with the 47 action programmes, any one of which could be put in a Bill or semi-Bill and might easily take up one, two or even three months. To expect us to consider these matters not just at a late hour but in a relatively short time is an insult to the British Parliament.

I do not intend to criticise the Government—these faults are inherent in the system. We should seriously consider inverting our procedures to have regard to the pyramid of legislation that invades us because of our voluntary consent through the European Communities Act 1972 and to give a due proportion of time to matters that are important to my constituents and, as the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) said, to his constituents. I, too, have constituents who are employed by GEC-Alsthom and I share many of his worries, for the same reasons.

Macro issues arise with regard to the rump of the one third of these extremely difficult aspects with which we must deal. The minimum wages proposal is, as much as anything, one that has come from the German Government. If we are to be realistic and consider the issues of political, economic and monetary union and everything that goes with it, we must be aware that the Germans have recently increased their investment in the United Kingdom by 200 per cent., that they will not change their company structure and that they have control over the secretariats and standards of the Community.

That is no criticism of the Germans, but we must wake up and realise what is happening. Let me concentrate for a moment on one issue—minimum wages. The workers in Dusseldorf will insist on having a minimum wage set at their level. Those in Spain who are employed by Volkswagen's subsidiary, Seat, are having kittens at the moment because they know that the whole system is being orchestrated to provide an in-built advantage to Volkswagen's employees in Dusseldorf. The same will apply throughout the Community.

It is not my purpose to make a speech about all these questions tonight. Incidentally, I shall have the opportunity to debate them with my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) at the Oxford union tomorrow night. Having said that, I think that we should be very wary of all the present proposals, of the proposal for a central bank and of the way in which the Franco-German axis is operating, which is implicit in the document, not because we do not want to remain in the Community but because, in fundamental questions such as those arising from the social charter—with some parts of which I agree but most of which I regard as unnecessary and avoidable—we must be sure that we do not end up surrendering to the interests of a Franco-German axis which exists for the benefit of a small proportion of the Community, rather than the Community as a whole. That is not what the European Community is all about; it is not communautaire.

I hope that, when the time comes, the Secretary of State and the Minister will regard some of these matters as of vital interest and, if necessary, exercise the veto on them rather than shunting them off to the European Court of Justice.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: We cannot exercise the veto.

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friend says that we cannot exercise the veto. We could debate that. I think that it is still possible and that the arrangements stand.

We must make quite certain that the rest of the Community understands that the EC is a community and that it does not exist merely for the benefit of one or two of its members.

11.17 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): I find myself in difficulty because I disagree profoundly with the two Front-Bench spokesmen. I want to tell the House why. I find the Minister's position—standing up, it seems, for Britain's interests against the proposals of the social charter—not very credible, coming, as it does, from a a party that took us into the Community, and into the single market,

without consulting the electorate. One element that has not been discussed by any hon. Member is the impact of all this on the elector's role, which is what concerns me.

I can understand the Cabinet's nightmare. Cabinet Ministers think that the social charter is a reincarnation of Frank Cousins and the Ministry of Technology, Barbara Castle and the Department of Employment and Productivity and George Brown and the Department of Economic Affairs put together, suddenly looming at them in the form of that radical Socialist, Jacques Delors, and they are fending it off. On the other hand, what they want to do—it is the precondition of their acceptance of entry into the ERM—is to hand this country over to market forces. They want everything to be determined by market forces, which are not accountable to the electorate either.

I presume that when the Minister said that we had to consider competition with other countries, he was thinking that if the Pacific rim countries can challenge us with cheaper goods because they pay lower wages, we shall have to bring our wages down to that level to survive. I do not agree with that. It is profoundly wrong.

I am afraid, however, that I did not agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) either. He spoke for a party which, I gather from press reports, is on the point of endorsing the social charter—subject to our discussions on Wednesday, when my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and I will be present to put a contrary view. But if one of us is in the lavatory, the other will have no seconder. We will have to keep together throughout the day. My hon. Friend the Member for Stretford ignored the fact that, once a law or directive is agreed in Brussels by one Government, it is irreversible. Our electorate should be told the truth: whoever they vote for in the next general election, our Government will not be able to change that Brussels legislation.

Although I am not a labour law historian, I know that the Taff Vale judgment penalised the railwaymen in 1906. That legislation was repealed by the Liberals. After the general strike, the Conservatives introduced the trades disputes legislation and that was repealed by a Labour Government. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) introduced the Industrial Relations Act 1971 and the Labour Government repealed it.

However, I must warn my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford that legislation from Brussels cannot be repealed. It is open to either a Labour Government or a Conservative Government to agree to directives at a Council of Ministers that tie any other Government for ever because Community legislation cannot be reversed. Admittedly it may be easier to influence that legislation with majority voting than with the unanimity rule. Under the latter, if one country stands out, a directive cannot be introduced. However, that works the other way round—it cannot be repealed without everyone agreeing. The hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) referred to Franco-German interests in high wages. Those countries would be unlikely to repeal something that might assist employment in a place like Manchester.

We should be considering a range of issues. The provisions in the social charter contain many things that look attractive on paper. However, if they were implemented at the Brussels level, even with the principle of subsidiarity, masses of legislation would go through this House without our debating it.

Perhaps the Minister has discovered something about his civil servants that my civil servants were quick to discover. They discovered that they did not have to bother with a Bill in the Queen's Speech when the legislation could be slipped in through Brussels. I remember a sensible proposal to standardise gas pipelines. Normally, such legislation would appear in a Bill. The Minister knows what it is like: Ministers queue up at the Queen's Speech committee or the legislation committee or whatever it is called under this Government and there is great pressure. Civil servants can bypass that process. They say, "Don't bother, Minister. We will have a word with COREPER and get it back as a directive. You just have to go to Brussels and agree to the proposal." The whole parliamentary process is then bypassed. That is the danger.

Democracy always hangs on a thread of public confidence. If I have to go to Chesterfield during the next general election and tell people that no matter who they vote for, we cannot deal with any matter that has been predetermined by previous Governments, are they going to bother to vote? If they vote thinking that we can change such legislation and we cannot, what will they say?

I loathe the word subsidiarity. However, subsidiarity should mean that everything should be considered at the lowest level, that is by the electors. It is not Parliament, but Ministers of any Goverment taking away the electors' powers. I was president of the Energy Council of Ministers during our presidency. I exercised the royal prerogative. In those circumstances, Ministers do not care about the House of Commons. We sit in solemn impotence. Even if few modifications were required, if Conservative or Labour Ministers had carried through such legislation at the Community level the House would be legally and constitutionally impotent.

The House must consider that problem. I have always believed that we are servants of the electorate and that sovereignty belongs to the people. They lend it to us in five-year terms. In the end, as stewards, we have to hand it back. We cannot tell them at the end that we gave it away to Jacques Delors. They would regard that as a breach of the Rousseau social contract. We are only the custodians of that power; we are not in a position in law, morality or constitutional practice to hand it to anybody else.

Mr. Cash: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Benn: I do not wish to detain the House because other hon. Members wish to speak, but this point really must be made. In a strange way, it unites hon. Members who differ fundamentally about how power should be exercised by the House. I disagree strongly. I am not a nationalist. I am not in favour of whipping up feeling against the Franco-German axis—that would be a great mistake. We live in a world in which we must harmonise by consent. I do not share any of the political objectives of the hon. Member for Stafford, but perhaps I share with him the determination that the right to make that decision is taken by electors, not by Ministers in the name of the Crown in pursuit of objectives that have never been fully disclosed to the British people.

I have five questions that I ask people who have power, and I recommend them to the House. If I see someone who is powerful, be it a traffic warden, Rupert Murdoch, the head of a trade union or a Member of Parliament, I ask myself these five questions: "What power have you got? Where did you get it? In whose interests do you exercise it? To whom are you accountable? How can we get rid of

[Mr. Benn]

you?" That last question is crucial. We cannot get rid of Jacques Delors; we cannot get rid of the Commission. We can get rid of a Government; but we cannot get rid of European legislation that a Government have entrenched during their period in office—be they a Labour Government with the Tories coming or the other way around.

I know that the House is empty, that it is late at night and that we are not having a vote. We have all the conditions for public neglect. The Galleries are not as full as hon. Members would like. However, the issue is fundamental. If we get it wrong we shall destroy parliamentary democracy in Britain. It is a time bomb ticking away under us. Perhaps the fuse is still long. When the British people discover that, whomever they vote for, they cannot change the laws under which the Government have governed, this House will collapse as a valid part of a democratic constitution. That is the argument that we should be having. When we have established it in the democratic way, we can resume the argument about how we should recommend the people to use the power that remains in their hands.

11.26 pm

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): It is probably worth remembering that the proposals in the draft charter go way beyond anything that is contained in the treaty of Rome or the Single European Act and that what is being proposed is totally novel and would extend the jurisdiction of the Community into matters that we never previously approved in this House or elsewhere in the Community. That may be good and there may be things in the charter that all of us would want. My hon. Friend the Minister of State stated that many things would be welcome. Equally, he said, and I agree, that there are other matters that would be profoundly unwelcome.

It was very helpful when the French presidency responded by saying that it felt that, in considering this matter further, there was a need to give greater consideration to the principle of subsidiarity. That is an important principle and I support it because, if the Community is to go forward harmoniously, it is important for us to decide which matters are important to be decided centrally as a group and which should be the preserve of national Parliaments. If we follow the principle of subsidiarity in doing those things locally which can best be done locally, we are not likely to have the conflicts that some hon. Members are worried may occur in the Community. We need to know what is acceptable and what is not.

What is clearly acceptable is health and safety at work. The British Government have quite a lot to teach other member countries. Our record on safety at work is very much better than those of most other Community Governments. It would therefore be to the benefit of all of us if those areas could be extended.

Equally, the mutual recognition of qualifications, which assists people to move across frontiers and to work in other Community countries, seems desirable. Once people move to other countries, it is, of course, important that they understand that they will be protected by health and safety at work measures which, before they go, they know will give them the same protection as that to which they are entitled at home. The big difference is that, although a person who is going to work abroad will probably find out how many hours he must work, his pay and the general conditions of his employment before he goes, he may not understand the health and safety at work conditions because they may vary widely between Community countries.

Health and safety provisions are therefore both sensible and desirable. What is not sensible and desirable is to build on that a whole series of corporate interventionist measures, such as are beloved of the Labour party and which used to be so beloved of many other Socialists in the European Community, although they seem to be less fashionable now in some quarters. Understandably, they are beloved of Madam Papandreou, the Commissioner. One can see that they fall within her general social philosophy. However, those measures seem to me to be profoundly damaging, not just to the British economy, but to the economies of many—in fact, most—of the other European Community countries.

Minimum wages are a good example and I entirely agree with what my hon. Friends have said about that matter. Fixed working hours are another example. They may or may not be attractive. Minimum rest periods could well be attractive to certain Members of this honourable House. One can well understand that the prospect of not having to sit all night could command considerable support in the Chamber. The notion of a statutory role for trade unions might not get such unanimous support on both sides of the Chamber—nor, I imagine, would the statutory compensation and worker participation proposals, with their shades of Vredeling. We thought that we had won the battle over Mr. Vredeling and his proposals, but no, back they come via Madam Papandreou. It is the same all over again.

I am concerned that the Commission is intent on bulldozing these matters through in an entirely unsatisfactory way. Perhaps the most worrying thing is that we do not yet know what articles of the charter it intends to use. We might be less worried if we were absolutely certain that there would have to be unanimity in the Council on all these matters, but I understand—perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to confirm this—that there is a suggestion that Madam Papandreou believes that many of these measures can be got through under the guise of health and safety measures. That would mean qualified majority voting on issues that go way beyond what most of us believe the treaties comprise.

Perhaps my hon. Friend will also confirm my understanding that the Commission has already received legal advice that its proposals are outside the law and contrary to existing treaties but that, notwithstanding that, it still intends to go forward on that basis, forcing us and anybody who disagrees to go to the European Court. If that is true, it is an extremely worrying development and is yet another example of Commission empire-building, against which all of us must be permanently on our guard.

11.33 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): When I entered the Chamber this evening, it was my intention to listen, so my contribution will be short. Nevertheless, I hope that it will provide more perspectives on the significance and importance of the document that we are considering. Of

course, it is a communication and individual items and proposals will appear later. However, the total shape must be recognised for what it is.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) advanced some constitutional issues on which I shall not comment, except to say that I have not heard them negatived anywhere. I should be interested to know whether any member of any party—certainly any member of the current Parliament—would give a negative response to his main thesis.

I should like first to comment on a subject on which the Select Committee on European Legislation has also commented, albeit indirectly: subsidiarity. Both the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) and the Minister referred to it tonight. According to evidence given to the Committee by its legal adviser, Mr. Speaker's counsel, subsidiarity is not a hard rock but an area of shifting sands, and a dialogue between the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) and the Minister—which has only just been published—demonstrates that.

The evidence that I gave, on behalf of that Committee, to the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs about the operation of the Single European Act contains a lengthy memorandum about subsidiarity submitted by Mr. Speaker's counsel. I commend it to the Minister, and to the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West: they will find if they read it that the only certainty about subsidiarity is that it is uncertain.

The issue arises in relation to conditions of work, a subject that forms part of the social charter. I am sorry that no hon. Member has mentioned an important point that was made by the Select Committee on European Legislation in HC11, Volume 7:

"The Committee recalls . . . that its Legal Adviser's note, annexed to its Twenty-sixth Report of Session 2 1988-89 gave fair warning that the proposed role of the Community in this sector would probably extend well beyond the subject area delineated by the Government. It also notes that the Select Committee on the European Communities of the House of Lords has made a similar assessment."

In other words, the treaty—and the use likely to be made of that factor by the Commission and the Council—will go some distance. If the principle of subsidiarity in that respect were prayed in aid, I have no doubt that the matter would go to the court—the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West mentioned this—and that the powers of the Commission to propose, and of the Council to legislate, would be decided there. That would be the final word—which ties up with what my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield has been telling us.

The report also states:

"Indeed, the Government's explanatory memorandum goes some way to recognise this likelihood in its admission that 'taken together the proposals in the action programme could have a major impact on United Kingdom Law. Significant changes in employment and social security law could be required'"—

I emphasise the word "required"—

"probably by means of primary legislation'."

In other words, there would be a proposal to change the law relating to social security in regard to employment, and we would be forced by our treaty obligation to pass the necessary primary legislation.

It must be specified who will make the requirement, and on whose authority. Under the treaty, there is no single article under which qualified majority voting would give such a requirement—although the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West has mentioned what Mrs. Papandreou is reckoned to be thinking. That refers to article 118A, which nevertheless has quite a few holes in it with regard to implemenation.

Article 100, which requires unanimity, can be used for any matter that contributes to the completion of the Common Market for which the powers are not already in the treaty. Article 235 again requires unanimity and can be used for any purpose not contained in the treaty. There may be some controversy over article 100A, which can be used for legislation to create the single market in 1992. At present it excludes matters relating to conditions of employment. At first sight, therefore, unanimity on most of those matters is maintained.

That is the position now, but discussions are going on which will culminate in intergovernmental conferences towards the end of the year and some revisions of the treaty. What national Governments will say about such revisions, which fortunately must be unanimous, remains to be seen. There is a decent argument for saying that, as there is to be a single market, the requirement for a single set of laws on industrial relations and collective bargaining should be put in place by the same method. Some may hold to that and others not, but it appears to be a possibility.

Almost at the opposite end of the scale to those big issues are public holidays. Will holidays literally meaning holy days, and Sunday observance, legislation on which has proved highly contentious in the House, come within the ambit of such legislation? I do not know the answer, but I put it forward as one of the intriguing possibilities, with which one may agree or disagree, which one day may confront us as part of the package labelled the social dimension.

11.42 pm

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): Many of the important points have been made, but I wish to endorse what my hon. Friend the Minister and other hon. Friends have said about health and safety proposals which should be dealt with on a pan-EEC basis. There are many reasons for that, but the one not yet given is competition. It is generally recognised that health and safety cost money and reduce output on many types of equipment because of working practices. Unless such regulations are common throughout the Community, competition will not be on an equal footing.

I emphasise the importance of enforcement and monitoring, particularly of health and safety measures, although they apply to many of the other proposals. We have a mix of countries with the Community, many of which have a dubious reputation on abiding by the regulations and directives issued by the Commission and approved by the various Councils of Ministers. It is commonly accepted that the French will happily agree to whatever seems politically right at the time, but subsequently may be lax on enforcement. When it comes to the Italians, anything to do with the work force is impossible to enforce because of the massive black economy, which is wholly outwith regulations. We must ensure that what is approved as a result of the action plan and the social charter leads to effective enforcement and monitoring throughout the Community, otherwise everything will be nothing less than a joke.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) and the hon. Member for Newham, South

[Mr. James Paice]

(Mr. Spearing) said that we should question which articles of the treaty of Rome should be used. I remind those hon. Gentlemen of the occasion when Madam Papandreou attended a meeting of the Select Committee on Employment, of which I was then a member. She made it abundantly clear that she intended to use article 118A, the health and safety provision, as the means to force through every aspect of the social charter in the spurious belief that one could construe anything to do with work as being to do with effective health and safety. That is wrong and I urge the Minister to make it clear that we will resist that abuse of the treaty of Rome by the Commission. I do not say that out of some innate opposition to the treaty or to the Community but because I care about the future of the Community. I should hate to see it and its institutions brought into disrepute by such blatant abuse on the part of the Commission.

The Minister has already pointed out the proposal relating to atypical forms of employment, not just part-time employment but anything other than full-time, open-ended contracts. What has happened to individual choice and responsibility? There are also proposals for a Community instrument relating to public works contracts and the introduction of a labour clause. The House debated the need for such a thing in Britain, but we have long since learnt our lesson about that. There is also a proposal for a Community instrument on consultation with industry—the old chestnut about industrial relations and workers on the board. It cannot be right for the Community to dictate the lines of such policies; it is right for business to make those decisions.

Will the proposals in the action plan achieve that which they are intended to achieve? Will they lead to more jobs and better pay and conditions for the work force? In many cases the answer will be no. Too much regulation effectively destroys competition. The single market is all about competition, but there is a direct conflict between that and the action plan. If we want the competition achieved by the single market, we cannot destroy the competitive side of the labour market with over-regulation.

A month ago I was fortunate enough to be in New Zealand where the Labour Government have completely deregulated industry. They have removed subsidies and moved out of the regulation business. They have not achieved the wonderful results enjoyed in the United Kingdom because they have not touched the labour market. It is still heavily regulated—even more so than our own under the previous Labour Government. The fundamental lesson that we must all learn is that too much regulation achieves negative results.

When will those who believe in socialist policies recognise that there is an inverse correlation between security and opportunity? The more one increases security, the more one damages opportunity. That is the case in housing and in the labour market but the Labour party fails to recognise that.

My hon. Friend the Minister has made a number of important points and it is clear that he understands the depth of feeling in the House about some of the proposals. I urge him to make absolutely sure that the benefits which will accrue to British industry from the single market are not destroyed by the anti-competitive nature of some of the proposals.

11.49 pm

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): It is an outrage to our democracy that we are debating 47 important measures at this time of night, with a handful of Members, when we clearly have no control over what happens. We are debating important labour regulations, including the introduction of the labour contract on public works and even matters such as the recommendation of the code of good conduct and the protection of pregnancy and maternity.

Despite all this, although no one, apart from those on the Labour Front Bench, have had a good word to say about what is happening, I think that the Minister's speech tonight was one of the most important that we have heard for a long time. He clearly said that, in his and the Government's view, many of the measures will hamper job creation, hinder competition, damage competitiveness in world markets and put at risk all the benefits of the single market. The Government have said clearly that what is proposed in a good number of measures is damaging and dangerous.

The Government must ask, as they should have done a long time ago, what on earth they can do about it. The Goverment have said that we can challenge the vires. If article 100A or 118A is suggested when they should not be used, we must complain about it. But how does one complain? The Minister must be aware that the first time a directive comes before the Council, unless everyone disagrees, nothing can be done about it.

The Minister said that the Government were also planning to go to the European Court. He must be aware that in almost every instance where the powers of the Community's institutions have come up before the court, the court has found in their favour. Therefore, as the Government are now openly admitting—I was delighted at the Minister's splendid speech—what is proposed is damaging and could undermine the Conservative Government's policies and democracy. We must make up our minds soon about what to do. If the powers of selecting the treaty base are being abused, and the measures are damaging, what on earth do we do?

I believe that going to the court is a waste of time, and the Government know that. The idea of challenging the vires is pointless, and the Govenment know that. We shall have to take more seriously the idea of a twin-track Europe, and this is where we must start.

11.53 pm

Mr. Eggar: We have had an excellent debate, as these late night, one-and-a-half hour EC debates so often are. We have covered a broad canvas, and I apologise to hon. Members because I probably will not be able to deal with the issues in the depth that they deserve. I am sure that we shall return to the so-called dimension and its implementation often in the future.

There are 40 to 50 directives or regulations that I suspect we shall consider during the next two years. Many of the issues will come up for consideration again. I hope that, before we consider them again, the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) will do his work better. The directive on collective redundancies was passed by the Commission,

and has been implemented by the House. It applies as much in this country as it does in others in the Community. But we can return to that on future occasions.

I stress again to the House that the key priority for us when we come to consider the various measures put forward under the so-called social dimension will be the ability or otherwise of those measures to add to job creation in the Community. That is not the view of just the United Kingdom Government. No less a person than the President of the European Commission, Jacques Delors, made exactly the same point in a speech to the European Parliament this January when he said:

"It is no longer possible to believe that anything can be achieved on the social front without action on the economic front."

We have heard a great deal this evening from the hon. Member for Stretford about his party's new-found enthusiasm for the European Community. That was challenged by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and, as usual, from a sedentary position, by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). Let us be quite clear about what the Labour party spokesmen are saying. They have not lost their enthusiasm for unnecessary regulation, bureaucracy and red tape; they have simply said that, as they cannot get it by Whitehall, they want it imposed by Brussels.

The Opposition consistently say that they believe that the ordinary British employer and employee do not know how to conduct social matters. The only people, they say, who know how to conduct them are the bureaucrats in Brussels or Whitehall. If the hon. Member for Stretford and his hon. Friends—apart from the right hon. Member for Chesterfield—get their way, the Labour party's new position on social policy will be to support qualified majority voting in the Community on all social issues.

I must ask the hon. Gentleman a few questions that flow from this new position. Do the Opposition want legally enforceable collective agreements, such as are the norm almost everywhere else in Europe? Do they want to deprive all civil servants, teachers and postal workers of the right to strike, as happens in Germany? Do they support and admire the Italian legislation that allows the police to force strikers to go back to work? Perhaps they are eager to import the requirement for a period of notice before a strike, as demanded by the law in Greece, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and France.

The fundamental question goes even further. The Labour party was founded, perfectly honourably, to represent the interests of the trade unions in the British Parliament. Is it now the party's position that in future all the major issues that are relevant to the working conditions of British employees should be decided in Brussels? That is implied in the Labour party's support for qualified majority voting——

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business).*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 9978-89 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Department of Employment on 15th March 1990 relating to Commission action programme relating to the implementation of the Social Charter; and endorses the Government's view that a key factor in ensuring that the achievement of the single market has a social dimension is to continue efforts to stimulate job creation and bring down unemployment.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(5) (Standing Committees on European Community documents).

PLANT HEALTH AND MARKETING STANDARDS

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 5486/87, 5803/88 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memoranda submitted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 17th April 1989 and 7th March 1990, 4023/90 and 4024/90, relating to plant health and 4020/90, 4021/90 and 4022/90, relating to marketing of certain plants and plant propagating material; and supports the Government's intention to negotiate satisfactory arrangements to ensure effective measures against the spread of serious plant pests and diseases to the United Kingdom —*[Mr. Sackville.]*

Question agreed to.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

LONDON DOCKLANDS

That the London Docklands Development Corporation (Vesting of Land) (London Borough of Southwark) Order 1989, dated 7th June, 1989, a copy of which was laid before this House on 14th June, in the last Session of Parliament, be approved.—*[Mr. Sackville.]*

The House divided: Ayes 164, Noes 25.

Division No. 220] **[11.57 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boswell, Tim
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Sir Barney
Hayward, Robert
Hill, James
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*

Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Raffan, Keith
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shersby, Michael
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, Sir John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Nicholas Baker and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

NOES

Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dixon, Don
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Haynes, Frank
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McWilliam, John
Michael, Alun
Nellist, Dave
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Wallace, James
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Harry Cohen and
Mr. Archy Kirkwood.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

Drug Trafficking

That the draft Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986 (Designated Countries and Territories) Order 1990, which was laid before this House on 3rd May, be approved. *—[Mr. Fallon.]*

WELSH AFFAIRS

Ordered,

That Dr. Kim Howells be discharged from the Welsh Affairs Committee, and Mr. John P. Smith be added to the Committee.*—[Mr. Ray Powell, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Executive Agencies (Department of Employment)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.*—[Mr. Fallon.]*

12.8 am

Mr. Henry McLeish (Fife, Central): I am grateful for the opportunity to discuss executive agencies in the Department of Employment, because this evening we have debated parliamentary sovereignty, democracy and accountability, and executive agencies raise a number of similar issues in the mother of Parliaments. I shall briefly spell out some of my general concerns about the agencies and the problems of parliamentary accountability and then describe in a little more detail some of the major concerns that trouble me and my hon. Friends.

It is too easy to talk in abstract terms about accountability within this House. Executive agency status —the most recent development in the Department of Employment—raises significant parliamentary and constitutional questions. Despite discussions in the House over the past 20 or 30 years on the hiving off of Government Departments or parts of them, the Department of Employment has probably seen more changes than any other. Although the issue of executive agencies is not topical at present, it bears examination because of current activities.

My concern is not about the substantive issues, whether or not there should be executive agencies, or their particular merits or demerits. Nor do I want to discuss the details of how their financial aspects are scrutinised. Nor will my remarks relate to the wider implications of privatisation, hiving off, and creating new agencies within the totality of Government policy.

My central concerns are these. Recent developments in the Department, especially executive agency status, pose serious threats to Parliament's ability to obtain the information necessary to ensure proper public debate of specific issues. Also, I want to ensure that Parliament can effectively oversee the Department's work, especially in relation to the labour market, which is crucial to economic employment, and the client. Government documents make extensive mention of client service. Finally, proper scrutiny of public expenditure is also threatened.

It is important to highlight the context within which the Department became an executive agency. One is talking about thousands of staff and an enormous number of clients being dealt with every day. One is talking also about £1 billion of expenditure. It is a substantial part of both the civil service and the employment group.

Inadequate consideration has been given to parliamentary accountability. In a day and age when the Executive has increased power to do as it wishes within Parliament, there is also growing pressure on the parliamentary timetable—which often does not permit debates on issues of major significance. I hazard a guess that, after 11 years of the present Govenment, the Executive at times shows more than just a hint of contempt for parliamentary scrutiny and accountability.

This is a time when that accountability should be strengthened, not weakened. My contention is that the activities currently being undertaken by the Department in line with Government policy could lead to a further weakening of parliamentary accountability. I feel sure that

right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House agree that that has been an important part of this Chamber and of Parliament, and I hope that the Minister will address it.

The Department is currently dealing with a range of extremely sensitive and, in my view, provocative issues. There is always the danger that behind the establishment of executive agencies which are clothed in value for money, efficiency, targeting, output and performance, there is more than a hint that the Department—the Minister grimaces—is obscuring, or failing to reveal, information that should normally be put before Parliament because of the sensitivity of certain policy changes.

I cannot let the opportunity pass without talking about the crisis in training, which the Minister of State will consider in detail following the establishment of the tfaining and enterprise councils. The Secretary of State is a little concerned about their budget, but the Minister will do an honourable job in ensuring they have more cash to spend, because a shortage of cash lies at the root of their problems. There is wide concern about the role of the executive agency that is symptomatic of wider trends in the past, especially in relation to the Department of Employment.

I said earlier that the hiving off of Departments and sections is not new. The Fulton committee was set up in 1966 and reported in 1968. Since then, a range of issues and ideas have been debated and discussed a bit more vigorously under this Government than under previous Governments. The "next steps" report was issued prior to the 1987 election and is being implemented by the Government. Even when the Fulton report was published in June 1968, paragraph 145 referred to the point that we are discussing:

"To function efficiently, large organisations, including government departments, need a structure in which units and individual members have authority that is clearly defined and responsibilities for which they can be held accountable."

There is a complex relationship between the Minister and the executive agency and between the Minister and Parliament. That is the important part of the triangle, which seems to be lacking in the consideration of the Government and the employment group. The initial concern that was flagged in discussions in the 1960s permeated much of the thinking in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s.

We must now look more clearly at the implications of the Government's attempts to change dramatically the nature of the civil service. I referred earlier to the abstract nature of the service. Parliamentarians like to discuss accountability, often in a vacuum. We need something tangible on which to hang the considerations that I have outlined tonight.

The Department of Employment provides an example of what has been happening and what is likely to happen. The past decade has seen the setting up of the Manpower Services Commission, which was futher developed into the Training Commission and is now the Training Agency. The Health and Safety Executive was established, as was the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service. In embryonic form, we can see developments similar to the executive agency, although they have distinctive characteristics.

The Department of Employment started early in having organisations one step removed from Parliament. The executive agency is a logical step forward, although a much more major and significant step than any of those that I have described. I think that is crucial, because the process has been continuing and because it has accelerated in the past, that we have reached a stage where the point of accountability becomes much more significant.

What about the practical issues that face the Department? I should briefly like to highlight some of the practical concerns that I have, starting with the executive agency which was established on 2 April. Curiously, on the simple point about asking parliamentary questions, we found that questions were, in the first stage, answered by the Minister, who said that they would be referred to Mr. Mike Fogden, the agency's chief executive. In turn, Members received a reply from Mr. Fogden.

The confusion lying behind this process reinforces my concern that, although the issue of the substantive policy detail has been reasonably worked through within the Department of Employment, parliamentary accountability has been an afterthought. This was highlighted in the sequence of events. "Employment Service: A framework Document for the Agency" was issued for discussion. Paragraph 4.3 stated:

"The Secretary of State will continue to answer questions from Members of Parliament on matters concerning the Agency, but will encourage them to contact the Chief Executive or other appropriate Agency managers direct on individual cases or operational issues".

On 8 November, speaking before the Select Committee on Employment, Mr. Mike Fogden was asked:

"When you become an executive agency on 2 April, how will this limit the ability of MPs to ask questions about the operation or your service?"

Mr. Fogden replied:

"In no way at all."

On 8 January 1990, in the debate on the Government Trading Bill, the Minister argued that Members

"will get a quicker response and be likely to resolve any follow-up points more quickly and to their satisfaction by going direct to the agency".—[*Official Report*, 8 January 1990; Vol. 164, c. 774.]

That was a reference to the accountability of Ministers. On 30 March, the Minister of State wrote to all Members, saying:

"Ministers determine the policy objectives of the Employment Service. We remain answerable to Parliament for the Agency's activities. We will continue to answer questions on the policy aspects of the Agency's work".

We cannot get a higher authority than the Prime Minister who, responding to a question by one of my hon. Friends, said:

"Ministers remain fully accountable to Parliament for all the work of their Departments. However, hon. Members may often wish in the first instance to deal directly with agency chief executives . . . and I would encourage them to do so."—[*Official Report*, 15 May 1990; Vol. 172, c. *375*.]

When the agency was established on 2 April, there were no hints that constituency business would go direct to it. The crucial issue of parliamentary questions has not been highlighted, and there has been departmental incompetence.

If a Member tables a parliamentary question, the Minister responds by saying that the request has been given to the executive agency, which writes to the Member. That Member receives the answer, but what about the other Members who do not see the now personal reply, and what about the House of Commons Library, which is a tremendous source of information for many bodies, especially hon. Members? It is in a state of confusion because it does not know whether it is receiving parliamentary replies.

[Mr. Henry McLeish]

The matter has perhaps not been fully thought through. If it has, and we have reached this stage, there is something fundamentally wrong with the way it has been handled by Ministers and the Department of Employment. If the executive agency difficulties were the only ones, they could be tackled almost immediately because of the fairly practical problems, but what about TECs in terms of parliamentary accountability?

On Tuesday 8 May, my hon. Friend the Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) asked the Secretary of State for Scotland about his practice of making information on local enterprise companies available. The Minister of State, Scottish Office replied:

"Final decisions have yet to be taken on the range of information about training programmes which local enterprise companies will be required to collect."

It is useful to remember that the LECs in Scotland will be the sisters of the TECs in England and Wales. The Minister of State continued in his reply:

"When these decisions have been taken I shall write to the hon. Member with a detailed list of information . . . My right hon. and learned Friend will make such information available to hon. Members provided that it is not commercial in confidence or personal information about individual trainees."—[*Official Report*, 8 May 1990; Vol. 172 c. 67.]

That means that commercial information is now being examined and discussed privately with TEC and LEC chairmen but is not coming before the House for discussion. Again, we shall have to await a ministerial judgment on whether hon. Members should have access to the information. That illustrates a gross contempt for the whole issue of accountability, and suggests something even more sinister. An hon. Member requiring information about a TEC or LEC may have to write to its chairman; if he requires information about 80 TECs, he may have to write to 80 chairmen. I hope that the Minister will reassure me on that in his reply.

My final question concerns non-statutory training organisations. We have had representations from the engineering industry training board about the lack of information and accountability in the hiving off of what were previously the training boards.

There are grounds for concern. I have targeted the key practical issue of how parliamentary questions concerning the executive agencies are answered, but it is time that the Minister answered our questions. I hope that the Minister will scrap the present method of responding to parliamentary questions for the executive agencies. There is nothing binding him to the present inefficient and bureaucratic method, given that the Department is still responsible, through the Minister, for the replies.

I hope, too, that we shall have an early statement on the Floor of the House in reply to our questions on the future of the executive agencies and their accountability, the future of TECs, the future of the non-statutory training organisations and a host of issues concerning the proper scrutiny of the executive. I am afraid that, at present, many hon. Members are worried by what is happening, and I hope that the Minister will take seriously the points that have been made.

12.27 am

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Mr. Tim Eggar): It is a pleasure to see the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) speaking from the Back Benches for a change. I thank him genuinely for the spirit in which he opened the debate. I know that he has had problems with responses to parliamentary questions intended for my Department and I am extremely grateful to him for the constructive way in which he raised those problems with me. I have no hesitation in saying that we have learnt lessons from our discussions with him and I am sure that that is in his interest as much as it in ours. That is the right way in which to take these matters forward. In the limited time available to me, I shall try to respond to his questions. If he feels that some matters need further discussion, I shall be happy to discuss them at a time that is convenient to him.

As the hon. Gentleman said, the employment service is only one of a number of agencies that have been established under the "next steps" initiative announced by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in February 1988. The aim of the initiative is well known: it is to improve the delivery of Government services to the customer and to increase value for money for the taxpayer, as well as achieving greater openness and accountability in government. The employment service is the largest agency so far and one whose activities are understandably of great concern and interest to right hon. and hon. Members.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the arrangements for dealing with questions and correspondence for the employment service are a matter of interest. But it should be borne in mind that "next steps" agencies are now established across the whole civil service. There are 31 such agencies covering about 70,000 staff, and many more are on the way. The arrangements that we have adopted for the employment service are in line with the Government's approach for agencies and they are intended to be helpful to the House in pursuing its concerns.

The Government have kept the House informed about their approach in a number of ways. The Government have explained that we are enhancing the arrangements for accountability in important ways, for example, through the publication of a framework document, the publication of agencies' objectives, and annual reports of their activities. We have also emphasised many times that Ministers remain fully accountable to Parliament for all the work of their Departments, including agencies.

However, we have set out our view that chief executives, who are accountable for the day-to-day operations of their agencies, are the best people to approach on matters for which they have delegated authority. Because of that, we have encouraged right hon. and hon. Members to deal direct with agency chief executives over inquiries about operational issues. That will include many of the matters raised with them by their constituents.

My right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Privy Council Office, who has responsibility for the civil service, explained this approach to the House in January during the Second Reading of the Government Trading Bill. Last week, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister dealt with the issue in a written reply and encouraged right hon. and hon. Members to approach agency chief executives on operational issues because they are best placed to respond promptly and effectively.

I should also remind the hon. Member for Fife, Central, and the House, that in many ways this is not a new or unusual procedure. On many occasions in the past Ministers have answered to the House for general policy and expenditure about a programme or service, while an

executive body has had primary responsibility for its delivery. In such cases, it is not at all unusual for right hon. and hon. Members to deal with the executive head over operational and constituency matters.

I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving me the opportunity to remind the House of the arrangements for accountability in the employment service. We thought long and hard about this matter, and are determined to ensure that the new arrangements are fully effective. Right hon. and hon. Members will recall that I wrote to them on the launch of the agency, enclosing a booklet entitled "The Employment Service: The Handling of MPs Inquiries and Parliamentary Questions". That booklet was drawn up by the employment service, and approved by Ministers. It sets out the way in which hon. Members' inquiries and parliamentary questions would now be handled. I am happy to recall for the House the main elements of the system.

The main change in accountability arrangements has been in the way in which correspondence from Members is handled. In line with the general approach that I have already outlined, hon. Members are now encouraged to take up queries and complaints on operational matters with the agency chief executive. Under the new arrangements for correspondence, hon. Members will find that they will get a quicker response to their inquiries and to any follow-up points that they may wish to pursue. That is certainly one of the strongest elements of the "next steps" approach and I would like to think that when hon. Members have become accustomed to this system they will prefer to approach the agency's local managers or chief executive rather than come direct to Ministers on operational matters.

As parliamentary questions caused concern to the hon. Member for Fife, Central, perhaps I could explain how the new system will operate. When a question is tabled, the Minister decides whether it is a strategic, resource or operational matter. The decision is then taken by Ministers whether the parliamentary question will be answered by Ministers substantively or referred to the agency for reply.

If Ministers decide that the question is suitable for a response by the chief executive, a reply is sent to the right hon. or hon. Member explaining what has been done. The agency chief executive then aims to send a full reply as soon as possible. Very often that will occur on the same day as the reply from the Minister. As the hon. Gentleman now knows, the chief executive will offer to place a copy of the reply in the Library if the hon. Member so wishes.

Mr. McLeish: Why has that not happened?

Mr. Eggar: If the hon. Gentleman says that that has not yet been done, I am surprised. However, I assure him that my Department's policy is that the hon. Member concerned will be asked specifically whether he wishes a copy of the reply to be placed in the Library. We have adopted that practice because we recognise that many matters of a constituency or personal nature will be of interest only to specific Members and therefore the procedure should not be automatic.

I hope that hon. Members can appreciate how much more quickly they can get operational information from the chief executive rather than through approaching Ministers via the House. The system is designed to ensure that hon. Members deal direct with the person—be it a Minister on policy matters, the chief executive, or the local manager—who is best placed to answer on the matter in hand that concerns the hon. Member. Above all, Ministers will continue to be responsible to Parliament for the employment service and will answer to hon. Members on any issue in debates relating to the employment service.

Ministers will also continue to reply to correspondence from hon. Members on strategic policy and overall resource allocation. Furthermore, we undertake to answer letters from any hon. Member who feels that he or she has not had a satisfactory answer from the employment service on operational issues.

The employment service will continue to be subject to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration. The permanent secretary will consult the chief executive about replies to complaints going through the Parliamentary Commissioner.

The hon. Gentleman also asked about the arrangements that have been put in place for handling hon. Members' inquiries and parliamentary questions about TECs. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State wrote to hon. Members on 2 April, enclosing a booklet explaining that in detail.

TECs, of course, are not "next steps" agencies, but private companies operating under contract to deliver the Government's training and enterprise programmes. Thus Ministers are able to set them clear objectives and targets while allowing them considerable flexibility in how they achieve those objectives and targets—for example, as the hon. Gentleman is aware, in choice of training providers. That will enable TECs to provide programmes in the most cost-effective manner and to tailor them to meet local needs. I am sure that the House welcomes that development.

Ministers will continue to answer to the House on overall training and enterprise policies, for the public funds made available to TECs, and, of course, for the contracts that govern the relationship between the Government and TECs.

The main change in accountability arrangements is that all correspondence sent to Ministers on matters that fall within the flexibilities allowed for TECs will be referred to them to answer. TECs are private companies, and it is right that they should answer on the matters that are under their discretion.

I stress to the hon. Gentleman and to the House that we are always available and willing to explain how the Employment Department group operates. To that end, I shall shortly be contacting hon. Members inviting them to a series of presentations and discussions on the workings of the Employment Department. We hope that those presentations will help right hon. and hon. Members better to appreciate the implications of the changes that we are setting in hand. We shall be asking local managers to explain how hon. Members can tap into their local Employment Department group network for advice and help for their constituents. We shall also be making available individual briefing packs containing information about the Department, its activities and contact points in hon. Members' own constituencies.

I hope that right hon. and hon. Members will take this opportunity to become better acquainted with the "delivery end" of the Department of Employment. We are determined to improve the quality of service that we offer, not only to our many clients but to hon. Members who

[Mr. Eggar]

want to appreciate the way in which we are delivering services and what we can do to help them and their constituents.

I hope that I have been able to explain clearly to the House what the new arrangements are. All the developments are part of a move towards increased effectiveness and ensuring continued accountability to this House.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-two minutes to One o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 22 May 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

SOUTHAMPTON RAPID TRANSIT BILL [*Lords*]
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 7 June.

EMPLOYMENT

Training and Enterprise Councils

1. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what recent representations he has received regarding TECs.

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Michael Howard): I have recently received a number of representations regarding training and enterprise councils covering a range of issues. I warmly welcome the interest that has been shown in the councils from all quarters, and I am particularly encouraged by the enthusiastic response from business leaders. The TEC programme is currently two years ahead of schedule, with 72 TECs already having received development funding. I can announce today that I have now approved the 13th TEC to enter its operational phase, the East Lancashire TEC.

Mr. Yeo: Although I welcome the greater involvement of the private sector and the decentralisation of the management training schemes, in view of the crucial importance for the future prosperity of Britain of our industry remaining fully competitive with those overseas, will my right hon. and learned Friend assure the House that he will monitor most carefully the performance of TECs in delivering to British employers the sort of highly trained work force that we will need in the 21st century?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is right to emphasise the importance of performance. TECs will operate a performance-based contract and will report regularly to me on their management and financial performance. The Department's training standards inspectors will monitor the quality of the training provided.

Mr. Wallace: The Department's brochure issued last year called for people who were chairmen, chief executives or top operational managers at local level to be involved in TECs. That is good as far as it goes, but does the Secretary of State recognise that that may exclude people who have expertise in training? What steps is he taking to ensure that TECs and their counterparts in Scotland, local enterprise companies, have people involved in them with some expertise in training? Is not it important to have trainers involved?

Mr. Howard: Of course, as the hon. Gentleman syggests, the involvement of trainers is important. There is ample scope for their involvement with training and enterprise councils, without necessarily serving on the boards of those councils. We now have about 1,000 chairmen and chief operating officers all over the country giving voluntarily of their time to the training and enterprise councils. They have the clout to make sure that those councils will deliver the results that I hope we all want.

Mr. Hannam: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that the TECs will play an important role in the training of disabled people for work, and that there is a danger that some of the existing schemes may be lost if there is no requirement that every TEC board includes someone with direct responsibility for the training of disabled people?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to emphasise the importance of providing adequate training for disabled people. That is a matter dealt with in the TEC contract, and about which the TECs must satisfy me before approval is given.

Mr. Blair: Will the Secretary of State confirm that according to his own Department's documents, cuts in youth training are expected of not just 7 per cent., but 15 per cent. after inflation and, in some areas, 30 to 50 per cent., with the loss of thousands of training places and hundreds of trainer jobs? How can we begin Britain's training revolution by savaging Britain's training budget?

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman constantly seeks to raise alarms about such matters. During the past four years, training spending by Government has increased in real terms by 60 per cent. at a time when unemployment has fallen by 50 per cent., so it is not surprising that some adjustment should be made this year. We are determined to maintain the guarantees on youth training and employment training, and the quality of training. But we have no commitment to ensure that every training provider who provided training last year should also do so this year, next year and for every year into the future. We believe in adapting to the needs of change and ensuring that those best able to provide the sort of training we want will do so.

Self-employed People

2. **Mr. Wilshire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were self-employed in December 1989.

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Mr. Tim Eggar): In December 1989, there were 3·3 million people in self-employment in the United Kingdom, an increase of no less than 70 per cent. since 1979.

Mr. Wilshire: Bearing in mind the fact that those are the last figures for the 1980s, how does the trend in the number of self-employed during the 1980s compare with the trend during the 1970s? Will my hon. Friend confirm that he has no plans to reduce the number of self-employed by raising a levy on the payroll of the self-employed, by removing the

upper earnings limit on the national insurance contributions of the self-employed and by loosing the trade union bully-boys on the employees of the self-employed, all of which are the official policies of the Labour party?

Mr. Eggar: In addition to that catalogue of the Labour party's official policies, the Labour party expects Brussels to play a significant role, with the added regulations and burdens that such EC intervention would impose on small businesses, all of which will be apparent if my hon. Friend cares to read the report of the debate in the House last night. Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen cannot get away from the fact that during the previous Labour Government the number of self-employed fell by 5 per cent. while under this Government it has risen by more than 70 per cent.

Mr. McAllion: How many people entered the enterprise allowance scheme in 1987 and what percentage have survived as ongoing genuine businesses? Does not the Minister understand that such schemes do not provide a genuine means of starting up new businesses, but are simply financially more attractive than the dole in the short term and give rise to all kinds of scams, such as the one that I discovered in Dundee—a delivery service for condoms?

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman is completely out of touch. We have just announced the 500,000th participant in the enterprise allowance scheme and yesterday I gave an award to a young lady who was the 10,000th EAS recipient in Nottinghamshire. More than 600,000 people are now working because of EAS who would not have been had it not been there.

British Tourist Authority

3. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what resources he plans to provide in the current financial year to the British Tourist Authority.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Patrick Nicholls): The British Tourist Authority will receive £27·7 million in 1990-91, an increase of 11 per cent. over 1989-90.

Mr. Stewart: Last year, Britain earned £7 billion from overseas tourism, £150 million of which was earned by Nottinghamshire from visitors attracted to our famous Sherwood forest. Does my hon. Friend agree that Nottinghamshire should be the site of the new national British forest?

Mr. Nicholls: My hon. Friend will be aware that there was a consultation exercise earlier this year on the siting of the new national forest. That is a matter for the Department of the Environment, but I accept that while the discerning tourist may not expect to see Robin Hood and his merry men, he needs the reassurance that there were sufficient trees for them to hide behind in the first place.

Mr. John D. Taylor: Does the Minister accept that we have four excellent tourist boards in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England, and that the British Tourist Authority in many ways duplicates their work? Does he agree that there would be a considerable saving of public expenditure of £27 million if it were abolished?

Mr. Nicholls: I cannot agree with that assessment. If the right hon. Gentleman looks at the recent tourism review he will see that the fears that had been expressed about a possible duplication have been taken care of. The work of the British Tourist Authority abroad shows that there is no such duplication. If, in the light of his experience, the right hon. Gentleman does not accept that, he will let us know, but I urge him to look at what was said in the review.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Does my hon. Friend agree that Michael Medlicott, the chief executive, and his team at the British Tourist Authority do a vital job spearheading the marketing of an industry that contributes more to Britain's gross domestic product than the automotive industry? What plans does the BTA have for stepping up tourist revenue from other European Community countries?

Mr. Nicholls: My hon. Friend is entirely right to draw attention to the work of the British Tourist Authority in promoting this country abroad. He may be aware that my noble Friend Lord Strathclyde, the Minister with responsibility for tourism, recently went to America and saw for himself the value of the work being done. It is for the BTA to decide, on a day-to-day basis, how to promote this country abroad. This year, however, the Government have contributed about £27·7 million, an increase of about 11 per cent. on the previous year.

Mr. Eastham: As the tourism is a multi-million pound industry, why is it denied equal treatment with other industries? Why has the Department of Trade and Industry denied grants to the industry to encourage it? I draw to the Minister's attention the fact that section 4 grants are being denied to tourism. They would help to improve the number and quality of hotels and other related matters that are so important to the industry.

Mr. Nicholls: The curious thing about the Opposition is that whenever they see a successful industry they want to kill it off quickly by the dead hand of state support. Tourism is an extremely successful industry which generates many jobs. The pity of it is that the service jobs generated by the industry are so often decried by the Opposition. The industry is thriving and it will do much better without the measures that the hon. Gentleman has in mind.

Mr. Alexander: When my hon. Friend considers giving more grants to the British Tourist Authority, with which I entirely agree, will he lean on it and ask it to encourage restaurants to print their menus in English rather than in French? Is not it a fact that tourists and British people find it totally unacceptable to have to read menus in French rather than in English? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Nicholls: As my hon. Friend can hear from the bon viveurs on the Opposition Benches, there may not be complete consensus on that point. I do not believe that I should make generalisations upon it. I am sure that the British Tourist Authority, the English tourist board and the other tourist boards pay attention to the exchanges in the House and that they will take note of what my hon. Friend said.

Low Pay

4. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy on low pay.

Mr. Eggar: The best way to help the lower paid is through continuing economic and employment growth and greater prosperity for all.

Ms. Mowlam: What action has the Department taken on the 5,528 establishments that underpaid in 1989? How many of them have the Department prosecuted, and is it a record of which he is proud?

Mr. Eggar: About 30,000 inspections were carried out by the inspectorate last year. About 97 per cent. of all the inspections revealed that proper payment was being made under the terms of the orders and that the ratio of prosecutions to establishments underpaying is higher now than it was in 1979.

Mr. Budgen: Will my hon. Friend confirm that proposals for a national minimum wage will lead either to an ineffectual gesture or, if they are effective and enforced, to the pricing out of work of people from the weakest section of the community?

Mr. Eggar: I agree completely with my hon. Friend. If one accepted the Opposition proposal that the national minimum wage should be set at half male average earnings, an estimated 750,000 people would lose their jobs.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Why does not the Minister answer the question that he was asked? How many were prosecuted?

Mr. Eggar: The inspectorate must take into account all the facts revealed, following the reviews that it makes after visits to premises. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman with the details.

Mr. Butterfill: Does my hon. Friend agree that a minimum wage would be even more damaging if it were as proposed by the European Community in the social charter, which is supported by the Opposition? Would not that damage not just British but Community interests?

Mr. Eggar: I completely agree with my hon. Friend. We in Britain have been extremely successful in creating jobs —a great deal more successful than our European partners. The major reason for that is that we have followed a deliberate policy of deregulation which has led to more jobs than elsewhere.

Ms. Short: Is not the truth that the Government are positively in favour of low pay? They have deliberately removed a whole series of protection and there has been an enormous growth in low pay in Britain. Low-paid work goes with low investment, poor training, high labour turnover and low technology and carries a large part of the responsibility for Britain's poor economic performance. Will the Minister confirm that every other country in Europe has a national minimum wage and that Britain would do better to have one?

Mr. Eggar: In so far as I was able to count the number of questions that the hon. Lady asked, I am confident that the answer to all of them is no.

Union Assets (Sequestration)

5. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to restrict the power of courts to sequestrate union assets.

Mr. Howard: No, Sir. Sequestration is a penalty which may be imposed by the courts, where appropriate, for any contempt of court. Any proposal to restrict that power would enable trade unions to flout the law with impunity.

Mr. Bowden: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is essential that the courts should have full power to sequestrate the assets of trade unions if trade union law is to be enforced, and that any attempt to diminish those powers would draw the teeth of legislation that has served us so well in trade union reform since 1979?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It is not without significance that in the very week that Arthur Scargill calls once more for industrial action the Labour party will be introducing proposals to make it easier for him to put his bully-boys back on the streets of Britain.

Mr. John Evans: But does not the Minister acknowledge that for any court to sequestrate all the assets of a trade union and thus prevent that union from paying its elderly members their pensions and superannuation benefits would be totally unjustified, and that any even-handed Government should legislate to make sure that that could not happen?

Mr. Howard: All that a union need do to avoid those consequences is obey the law. I hope that the hon. Gentleman and all his hon. Friends will encourage trade unions to obey the law so that none of those consequencies ever arises.

Mr. Thurnham: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that those who wish to repeal the legislation are
"frozen fossils locked in a time warp",
to use the words of Eric Hammond, leader of the electricians' union?

Mr. Howard: I agree with my hon. Friend, but there is perhaps one difference. Unlike frozen fossils, those proposals have the potential to wreak infinite damage on the British economy and on the economic prospects of every man, woman and child within it.

Disabled People

6. **Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he intends to change the 3 per cent. quota provision for the employment of disabled people.

Mr. Eggar: All aspects of the quota scheme are being considered in the review of services to people with disabilities which my Department is undertaking. We expect to publish next month the consultative document giving the results of the review.

Mr. Ashley: Is the Minister aware that 250,000 disabled people who are able to work and available for work have no jobs? That is not because of the failure of the quota system, but because of the Government's failure to enforce it. Will the Minister study the West German system which imposes a 6 per cent. quota and a levy on employers who

evade it? Will he stop making excuses about disabled people not being available and follow the West German example?

Mr. Eggar: The right hon. Gentleman knows very well that the consultative document will discuss, among other things, the quota system. Registration as a disabled person is voluntary, and only 1 per cent. of the work force have registered as disabled. So, by definition, it is not possible to meet the 3 per cent. quota. That will be explored in the document and I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will wish to contribute to the discussion that follows its publication.

Mr. Bowis: Does my hon. Friend agree that the ability of the disabled to take up the available jobs is as important as the quota? Does he agree that the employment premium for the disabled will be of enormous help, but that training is vital? Training for the disabled often involves a greater ratio of trainer to trainee than for the rest of the population. Will my hon. Friend ensure that that is taken into account when considering training for the disabled?

Mr. Eggar: That is being and will be taken into account. That is also the reason why the Government consider it especially important to provide special aids to employment to get people into employment in normal workplaces. That has the general support of the community.

Mr. Wigley: Does the Minister accept that the fact that there may be weaknesses in the present quota system is not an argument for doing away with it altogether, but an argument for overcoming the weaknesses to ensure that disabled people are helped into employment? In that context, will he ensure that as the training and enterprise council system develops, enough money is earmarked for the needs of disabled people so that they can have adequate training without any negative effect on the targets set for those running TECs?

Mr. Eggar: We very much look forward to the hon. Gentleman's comments on the consultative document on issues such as those he has outlined. I am sure that they can be explored within the context of the document. There are many different views and it is important that we move towards a better understanding of the arguments on every side. I assure the hon. Gentleman that I know from my discussions with many TEC directors that they take their responsibilities for the disabled very seriously, and that is recognised in the contracts signed with the TECs that have gone operational.

Mr. Simon Coombs: Will my hon. Friend confirm that as the number of registered disabled people has declined in recent years, the number of disabled people obtaining work has increased? Will he say whether during his current inquiries he has examined the ability of Government Departments to meet the quota figure?

Mr. Eggar: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We have been fairly successful recently in helping people with disabilities into jobs. Last year, for example, 77,000 people with disabilities were helped by jobcentres to find jobs, and that compares with 66,000 three years ago. On Government Departments, I assure my hon. Friend that my Department tries hard to recruit and employ disabled people; 2·7 per cent. of the Department's employees are disabled.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To return to training for the disabled, if the Minister is telling the House that the Government intend to maintain the quality and the guarantees, why did the Spastics Society recently withdraw from the employment training scheme because of underfunding and why are Share Community and Lambeth Accord likely to follow suit? If such providers are lost, where are the guarantees and the quality of training, and who will train the disabled?

Mr. Eggar: There was an increase in expenditure on helping the disabled from £220 million in 1986-87 to £350 million in 1988-89—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman should listen to the facts. Participation in training courses increased from 11,800 in 1983-84 to more than 19,000 last year. That is the record.

Tourism (Black Country)

7. **Mrs. Maureen Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the growth in black country tourism and the potential for job creation.

Mr. Nicholls: There is every sign of an encouraging growth in tourism in the black country. A number of major projects are either planned or under construction. The black country tourism initiative has done much to help to develop tourism in the area.

Mrs. Hicks: Although my hon. Friend will be only too well aware of the reputation of the black country as the heartland of traditional manufacturing industry, which is thriving under this Government, is he aware of its growing reputation for its major contribution to tourism? A number of exciting new projects are taking place and there is a huge amount of investment, with people putting their faith in the region. Jobs are also being secured and created. Will my hon. Friend do me the honour of allowing me to take him on a day trip round the black country—starting, of course, in Wolverhampton—so that I can show him some of the attractions and so that he can meet many of the employees who are doing their best to attract visitors to the black country?

Mr. Nicholls: My hon. Friend makes me an offer that it would be churlish to refuse, and I look forward to the visit. I am well aware of the attractions of the black country. I think that I am right in saying that my hon. Friend was a member of the executive committee of the co-ordinating body that looks after tourism in the black country.

My hon. Friend referred to the number of jobs that had been generated in the area. Black country tourism initiative staff estimate that, directly and indirectly, about 2,000 jobs will be created in tourism. I am certainly well aware of the work of the Heart of England board. From my tours in that part of the world, I can confirm that it is a delightful area, and its tourism potential has not yet been fulfilled.

Sir John Stokes: My hon. Friend and I have crossed swords on this matter before, and he will know my view that while it is most gratifying to have an income from tourism and the job creation that it entails, there is also a danger of ruining parts of England, as other parts of the

world have been ruined. In the west midlands, for example, Stratford-upon-Avon is so crowded that it is getting near bursting point.

Mr. Nicholls: I was not aware that I had crossed swords with my hon. Friend, but if he says that that is what happened, so be it. I accept that there is a paradox and that a dilemma arises: we want to attract people to particular areas because they want to see what is there but in the end tourism may destroy the very things that people want to see. My hon. Friend may have seen a perhaps slightly tongue in cheek article in *The Daily Telegraph* today by Lord Grimond, who draws attention to precisely the problems to which my hon. Friend refers. I cannot offer my hon. Friend an answer or solution, except to say that this is something that we shall certainly have to watch.

Technical and Vocational Training

8. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the future of the technical and vocational education initiative.

Mr. Howard: The public expenditure White Paper shows planned expenditure in the TVEI of £134 million in 1990-91, £133 million in 1991-92 and £141 million in 1992-3. I am considering the future rate at which authorities can join the programme.

Mr. Worthington: Do I understand from that answer that the Secretary of State is about to announce a cut in the rate of expansion of that service, which will mean that the six authorities in Scotland, including Tayside, Argyll, Lanark and Ayr, will lose out? This is an important matter because in Scotland children choose in June the subjects that they will study. They start the following year's programme in June and have already made their choices by then. A cut will demoralise teachers and pupils who have chosen courses that will not exist next month.

Mr. Howard: The figures that I quoted are well known and in the public domain. It is always made clear that the rate at which new authorities can be admitted to the programme will depend upon the availability of resources, and that is what I am considering for next year.

Mr. Madel: Some of the equipment installed in the early years of the TVEI is obviously in need of replacement. Is my right hon. and learned Friend satisfied with the speed at which that is being done?

Mr. Howard: I dare say that my hon. Friend is right, and there is always room for improvement. After the initial five years, the funding of the TVEI is, of course, a matter for local education authorities.

Mr. McLeish: Why does the Secretary of State intend to cut the TVEI budget by £300 million between 1990-93 and 1994-98? Will he confirm that he regards that as part of the cuts crisis that is swamping his Department, or does he think that it is merely an adjustment?

Mr. Howard: There is no cuts crisis of any description. I do not know where the hon. Gentleman got his figures for the years from 1993 onwards. I have given the figures for the current public expenditure White Paper, and we are considering the pace at which we can admit further authorities to the programme.

Value Added Tax

9. **Mr. Page:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the net increase in the number of businesses registered for value added tax in *(a)* 1978, *(b)* 1988 and *(c)* 1989.

Mr. Eggar: Early indications are that the net increase in 1989 was around 80,000, compared with 64,000 in 1988. In the five years 1975 to 1979 together, the net increase was 85,000.

Mr. Page: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Does not it show, by whatever criterion one would care to take, that this Government's commitment to small businesses is in contrast to that of the previous Administration? Looking to the future, how will we get those small businesses to grow into medium-sized businesses? How can they develop? In particular, they need management training to expand and become the employers of the future.

Mr. Eggar: My hon. Friend is right. Almost as many businesses registered for VAT for the first time on a net basis last year as registered for the whole five years of the previous Labour Government. My hon. Friend is also right to identify the critical importance to small businesses of management training. Most studies show that small businesses fail more as a result of poor or weak management than of any other factor. That is why my Department has put funding into businesses growth training to help small businesses and why we have played a major role in sponsoring open learning management packages.

Mr. Ron Brown: Is not it the case that capitalism is poor and weak, at least at the lower levels and for smaller businesses, because nine out of 10 businesses fail in the first year due to the Tory Government's policies? We have learnt a lesson from that north of the border and that lesson has been learnt south of the border as well.

Mr. Eggar: I know that this does not fit in with the hon. Gentleman's view of the world, but the fact is that well over 1 million more people work for themselves now than in 1979. That shows that the commitment to enterprise is alive and kicking.

Training and Enterprise Councils

10. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he has taken to ensure that training agencies operating under the new TEC system will be able to provide adequate services for training under their post-1 April 1990 budgets.

Mr. Howard: Training and enterprise councils set out their proposals for providing training in their corporate and business plans which they agree with me. Subsequently the standard and quality of the training being provided is regularly monitored by my Department.

Mr. Speller: How close is that monitoring within the present tight budgetary controls? In Ilfracombe, which often has the highest youth unemployment in the country, a training establishment has been brought up, closed and the young people are now trained 12 miles away at great cost to a new training establishment. How does my right

hon. and learned Friend control the buying, closing and selling of businesses in that new growth industry—the training industry?

Mr. Howard: As I said earlier, the pattern by which training is provided will inevitably change from time to time. We cannot expect the same training providers to be in business year on year on year. The training and enterprise councils' operating agreement provides that non-employed trainees on youth training must be paid at least those travel costs in excess of £3 that are incurred in connection with their training. The councils will take that obligation into account in assessing matters of the kind to which my hon. Friend referred.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Minister aware that earlier this afternoon the Prime Minister's Parliamentary Private Secretary was engaged in a training scheme on the Government side of the House? He was trying to get planted questions put to the Prime Minister and was going around giving training to Tory Members so that the Prime Minister would be aware of the questions that would come up when she turns up in the House at a quarter past three.

Mr. Howard *rose*——

Mr. Skinner: And the Prime Minister's PPS is not registered for VAT.

Mr. Howard: I am sure that no amount of training would enable anyone to predict a question asked by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) if he is fortunate enough to catch your eye later this afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Butcher: Will my right hon. and learned Friend liaise with his colleague the Secretary of State for Education and Science and encourage him to give greater autonomy to local education authority colleges of further education which, if given that autonomy, more self government and more responsibility for their budgets and employment policies, could market their wares far more effectively into a rapidly changing training market?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend will doubtless be aware of our proposals for pilot training credit schemes. Those who obtain the training buying power that the credits will provide will be able to use them at colleges of further education and I believe that that will go a long way towards achieving the objective to which my hon. Friend referred.

Training

11. **Mr. Jack Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate the numbers of employees receiving training in Britain.

Mr. Eggar: Figures from the labour force survey show that, in the spring of 1989, 3·1 million employees received job-related training in the four weeks prior to the survey. That was an increase of more than 70 per cent. compared with the same period in 1984.

Mr. Thompson: When will the Minister recognise that in the north-east of England the coal mining, shipbuilding and heavy engineering industries have now been decimated? They were the basis of good training schemes in the past. Such schemes need to be replaced by other means of training, which cannot be supported by the market forces philosophy. They need Government support. When will the Minister bear in mind the pleas of the Engineering Council and the Machine Tool Technologies Association for training, particularly in engineering, to be considered as a national asset, as it is in other European countries, where it does not necessarily respond to market forces?

Mr. Eggar: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that training is important to the future prosperity of the north-east, as it is in the rest of the country. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will join me in welcoming the splendid way in which the north-east has responded to the initiative to set up training and enterprise councils. Indeed, three of the first 10 TECs to be established were from the north-east.

Mr. Batiste: Does my hon. Friend agree that, as the demographic trough bites in the 1990s, it is important that the reducing number of young people leaving school should receive the fullest possible training? Will he therefore liaise with his colleagues in the Department of Education and Science to ensure that, as the national curriculum develops, children leave school with the skills that they need to take advantage of the training opportunities that his Department is making available?

Mr. Eggar: I completely agree with my hon. Friend. Liaison between schools and industry is extremely important. I pay tribute to the major contribution made by senior industrialists by going on to governing bodies of schools, by supporting the compacts scheme and various other schools—industry proposals that have been put forward, and are being put forward almost daily. They are extremely important. It is right that youngsters should be work-ready and training-ready when they leave school.

Noise at Work

13. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether his Department will commission any research into the effectiveness of the noise at work regulations.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive is already planning to evaluate those regulations. During 1991 and 1992 it will be undertaking a survey of the extent to which the required measures have been carried out in industry.

Mr. Evans: Is the Minister aware that hundreds and probably thousands of people in St. Helens have had their hearing severely impaired by the dreadful noise levels that appertain in the glass industry and that they are still not covered by the noise at work regulations? Will the Minister accept an invitation from me to visit a glass factory in St. Helens so that I can convince him of the justice that those workers deserve?

Mr. Nicholls: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his courtesy in telling me that he wished to raise this issue. As I understand the position, the regulations apply to all places of work. I can see no reason why they should not apply to such a place of work. If the hon. Gentleman can tell me why he has been given that information or where the information has come from, I promise that I shall look into it at once.

Sir Anthony Grant: Will the research into noise at work include the House of Commons? The noise here and the audibility of the system are such as to make work almost impossible sometimes.

Mr. Nicholls: The powers of the Government may be great, but they are not sufficient to take care of the level or quality of the noise in the House. I am afraid that both may defeat us.

Low Pay

14. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he received on low pay in the current year from the north of England.

Mr. Eggar: Since 1 January 1990, my right hon. and learned Friend has received 13 representations on low pay from the north of England.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Why is it that more than 1 million people in the north and north-west of England earn what the Council of Europe defines as low pay? What possible moral justification can there be for a newspaper to publish advertisements offering people less than £2 an hour in the 1990s? People cannot live on that amount. What are the Government going to do about it?

Mr. Eggar: I will tell the hon. Gentleman what the Government are not going to do. They are not going to do what the Opposition want to do—introduce a national minimum wage which will reduce the number of jobs available to the people of this country. The hon. Gentleman must remember that, if we were to introduce a national minimum wage of half average manual earnings, there is likely to be a loss of jobs of about 750,000 over three to four years. Low pay is a great deal better than no pay.

Labour Statistics

15. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average annual number of working days lost in *(a)* 1970 to 1979, *(b)* 1980 to 1989 and *(c)* the most recent 12-month period for which figures are available.

Mr. Howard: On average, there were 12·9 million working days lost a year in the period 1970 to 1979; 7·2 million in the period 1980 to 1989; and, it is provisionally estimated, 5·1 million in 12 months to March 1990. The number of stoppages in 1989 was the lowest for over 50 years.

Mr. Oppenheim: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that that good news has some relationship to the massive improvement in the performance of British industry in the past decade? Does he further agree that a return to unbridled secondary picketing would destroy all the progress that British industry has made and would return us to the days of the 1970s when British manufacturing output fell under the last Labour Government?

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Nothing would be more guaranteed to deal a death blow to this country's economic prospects than the Opposition's proposals to make striking easier, which would lower output, lower prosperity and lower the living standards of everybody in Britain.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 22 May 1990.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Mr. Nicholson: Will my right hon. Friend spend a few moments today recalling the material damage done to this nation, and the damage to its reputation and to individual liberties, by the episodes at Saltley, Grunwick, Wapping and during the 1984 miners' strike? Will she give a pledge to the House that, despite certain proposals from certain other sources this week, no Government under her leadership would legalise secondary industrial action or secondary picketing?

The Prime Minister: I am glad to give my hon. Friend the assurance he seeks. All who remember the scenes of the secondary picketing and the terrible intimidation recall also the admiration we felt for those who were determined to exercise their right to go to their place of work and who had the courage to go through the lines. I heard my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment say a few moments ago that since we brought in our revised laws on secondary picketing and trade union reform the number of industrial stoppage last year was the lowest for a very long time.

Mr. Kinnock: Will the Prime Minister confirm, as her Chancellor acknowledged earlier today, that under her Government the tax burden on British families is higher than it has ever been under any Government in history?

The Prime Minister: I confirm——*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: I confirm that at all levels of income the rates of income tax have been reduced—on earned income, from 83 per cent., when we went into Downing street, to some 40 per cent. at the top rate, and, on the standard rate, from 33p in the pound to 25p in the pound. The people have done very well both as to increased income and reduced tax levels.

Mr. Kinnock: Yes, and after that disposable income has been obtained, people are then faced with doubled VAT, higher charges and now the poll tax, which is the reason why, as the Prime Minister should admit, she is charging the highest burden of taxation of any Government in history. Why are the Government and the Prime Minister so reluctant to claim what is truly theirs—the record for being the biggest taxers ever?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman would put up taxes all right. *[Interruption.]* I doubt very much whether the British people want to go back to 83p in the pound on earned income and 98p in the pound on savings

income, or to have their taxes put up, as I understand the right hon. Gentleman would like to do. Their incomes have gone up tremendously and most of them—indeed, all of them—have had a substantial increase in their standard of living.

Mr. Kinnock: Does the Prime Minister recall making the promise that the share of the nation's income taken by the state would be steadily reduced under her Government? She ratted on that promise, of course, but will she now admit that, after 11 years, and despite the oil revenues, the asset sales and the fiddle on the pensioners, her Government are still the biggest taxers in history?

The Prime Minister: We have by far the biggest income in history and the lowest tax rates since before the war. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will remember that under Labour Governments, when the spending went up and up and up, the Chancellor had not the courage to finance it honestly and took a public sector borrowing requirement that was equal to 9 per cent. of GDP, an amount that would now equal a borrowing of £44 billion a year.

Mr. John Carlisle: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that her meeting last Saturday with President de Klerk of South Africa was extremely satisfactory and that she found him to be a man of integrity and courage and a man in a great hurry for reform? In those circumstances, will she continue to relax what few economic sanctions we have against that country, and withdraw from the innocuous Gleneagles agreement and resume sporting links with South Africa?

The Prime Minister: I think everyone has been impressed with President de Klerk's integrity and courage. He has embarked on a reform that will bring an end— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. We cannot have conversations across the Chamber. The Prime Minister is answering a question.

The Prime Minister: I shall start again, Mr. Speaker. I think everyone who saw or heard him has admired President de Klerk's integrity and courage. He has embarked on reforms which are irreversible, which will bring an end to apartheid and which will, through negotiation, bring about a democratic Government on a non-racial basis. I believe that he deserves to be fully supported for the courageous reforms that he is making. I believe that there is now no place for sanctions and that they are almost irrelevant. Those people who want South Africa to have a prosperous economy should not support sanctions in any way.

Q2. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 22 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Lloyd: Is the Prime Minister aware that last year 514 fatal accidents were reported to the Health and Safety Executive, reversing the long-term downward trend in deaths at work? Given that background, can the Prime Minister explain why the HSE is seeking to make cuts in its establishment? Will she give the House the guarantee that, if the HSE wants more money to maintain or to improve the level of services that it now provides, that money will be made available?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman knows, we believe that health and safety are of prime importance in the work force. Last year there were one or two terrible accidents that may have added to the total. We shall fully support the Health and Safety Executive in its arduous and very important work.

Sir Ian Gilmour: In view of my right hon. Friend's successful meeting last Saturday and the terrible killings in Palestine during the past few days, does she see any sign of an Israeli equivalent to Mr. de Klerk in Palestine?

The Prime Minister: As my right hon. Friend is aware, two of the great problems of the Arab-Israel situation at the moment are, first, that there is no Government of Israel with whom to negotiate and, secondly, there are no signs of talks beginning. We have done everything that we can —and will continue to do everything that we can—to try to get those talks started. Events almost every day show the importance of that. We shall pursue the matter through our usual channels.

Q3. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 22 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Livsey: Does the Prime Minister agree that the subject of public health is above party politics and that the issue of BSE and beef has been subjected to the antics of politicians? Does she further agree that that issue needs to be tackled more firmly by the Government? Although British beef is indeed safe to eat, does the Prime Minister accept that she needs to consult further with scientists in the Department of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and with independent scientists? Will she please make a statement on that?

The Prime Minister: I am not certain whether the hon. Gentleman heard or read the debate yesterday. If he did, he will have heard my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture point out that we commissioned the Southwood report some time ago, and took action upon all its recommendations. We could not have used a more distinguished scientist. We then appointed Dr. Tyrrell of the medical research council to advise my right hon. Friend further, and any advice that he has given has been taken by my right hon. Friend. We can do no better than take the best scientific advice available. The chief medical officer has also given his advice. We foresaw some of the problems, we appointed the scientists and we have taken their advice. The hon. Gentleman cannot ask for more.

Q4. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 22 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Dr. Twinn: Will my right hon. Friend join me in condemning the disgraceful attack on graves in the Jewish cemetery in Edmonton? Will she send her sympathy to the family and friends of those who are buried there who have suffered?

The Prime Minister: I gladly respond to my hon. Friend's invitation, as would every hon. Member. Those attacks, wherever they occurred in the world, were appalling and should never have happened. We shall all do all that we can to ensure that they never happen again. We wish to express our sympathy for those who have suffered, and for all Jewish people everywhere who have been reminded again of such terrible events.

Mr. Livingstone: Does the Prime Minister agree that she would not be prepared to retain any individual in her Cabinet if it could be demonstrated that that person had been prepared to advocate an armed coup against the last Labour Government? Will she take action in relation to the letter from General Sir Walter Walker, in which he recounts details of a meal at which he was present with several City financiers, along with the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley), and had to reprimand the right hon. Gentleman for taking exactly that line?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman brings out all kinds of tittle-tattle that is not worthy of reply. The last Labour Prime Minister answered the fundamental part of his question, and I have nothing further to add.

Q5. **Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 22 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that her Government will not increase taxes on people with relatively modest incomes—such as graduate and medium-ranking teachers with responsibility allowance, local government officers or nurses in grades H and I—and then turn around and describe them as high-income earners, as the Leader of the Opposition did in Bootle yesterday? He would skin them alive.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend puts her own view in her own way. I entirely agree that many medium-income people such as some teachers, nurses and policemen would be adversely affected by the increases in taxation proposed by the Labour party. I hope that it will never be put into office to implement those increases.

Mr. Rees: Was not it very unwise, given the political situation in Northern Ireland, for the right hon. Lady to allow her Ministers in Northern Ireland—who do an excellent job within the community, far better than any other Minister—to campaign for a Conservative candidate who ended up in the last six in the election? That was lower than the Irish Independence party, Sinn Fein and the Workers party. Surely the Prime Minister cannot let that happen again.

The Prime Minister: In a democratic system, people are not precluded from putting up for a by-election if they wish to do so—unless they have to have a licence to do so in the Labour party.

Q6. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 22 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. David Evans: I am sure that my right hon. Friend will agree with me that on this side of the House we have history and tradition on our side. *[Laughter.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Evans: Does she think that it would be a good idea if we had a flag day to commemorate a day that is important to the Conservative party, such as the day on which Winston Churchill became Prime Minister—10 May 1940—or perhaps the day on which the task force set off for the Falklands to show the world that sovereignty and freedom came before everything else, or perhaps even the day that my right hon. Friend became Prime Minister? On the other hand, she might agree with me that the most significant day for the Conservative party was 1 October 1983, when the Leader of the Opposition became leader of the Labour party, went to Brighton beach and fell flat on his face. He has done just that every Tuesday and Thursday ever since.

The Prime Minister: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his ingenuity and clarity of expression. I entirely agree with him that we are the party with the longest history behind us and the longest future before us, all in serving the people.

NEW MEMBER

The following Member took and subscribed the Oath:

William David Trimble, Esq., for Upper Bann.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR FRIDAY 8 JUNE

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. Ian McCartney

Mr. Doug Hoyle

Sir Trevor Skeet.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the draft Police (Dispensation from Requirement to Investigate Complaints) Regulations 1990 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

Drug Testing (Schools)

3.33 pm

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): I beg to move,

That leave to given to bring in a Bill to allow random—

[Interruption.]

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will hon. Members leaving the Chamber please do so quietly?

Mr. Powell: I hope, Mr. Speaker, that I get injury time for that.

I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to allow random drug testing of schoolchildren; and for connected purposes.

The opportunity to introduce this Bill would not have been afforded to me had it not been for the efforts of my hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon), who spent most of the early hours one morning patiently waiting to reserve this spot, for which I record my gracious thanks.

The Bill aims to assist the many people who, over the years, have vainly attempted to stop children and others ruining their lives, and, more often, the lives of their families, by taking drugs. We are thankful for all the efforts to fight this curse in society, but while consoling some, those efforts cannot resolve the problem. Something more positive must be done, and that is what my Bill aims to do.

Over the years many attempts have been made to introduce similar Bills. On 9 December 1970, my hon. Friend the then Member for West Lothian, now Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) introduced his bill, Medical Inspection (Evidence of Drug-Taking) (School Pupils) Bill, as reported in the *Official Report* at column 429. That Bill was introduced 20 years ago, but Parliament has not yet legislated to solve a problem that is a menace to our children and a tremendous strain on our teachers and headmasters—the educationists—medical officers, doctors, the Health Service and many others. Above all, that menace is a strain on the sick society that allows our young to be trapped in the drug nightmare.

The Serjeant at Arms is interested in this subject and in recent discussions with me he referred to an ode, "The Old Dope Peddlar". I shall quote one verse that is particularly relevant to the Bill:

"He gives the kids free samples because he
knows full well
That today's young innocent children are
tomorrow's clientele".

That highlights the problem. That ode was no doubt written many years ago, yet we still have that old dope peddlar, and he is a greater menace in 1990 because of the harder and more dangerous drugs that he peddles. Please let us make efforts to stamp out the menace.

In April the Princess of Wales spoke at a conference on drug abuse among children. She said:

"we should catch them in the classrooms before the dealers catch them at the school gates".

The problem is how to catch them and how to stop children taking drugs before they are hooked. I am sure that the Bill will have all-party support in its efforts to license legally agreed random testing to diagnose the source of the problem. The children, once identified, would be treated with care and compassion. The Bill is a further attempt to eliminate drug abuse from among our children and our grandchildren.

Britain now has a major problem because of drug taking in schools. Drug abuse is increasing despite the best efforts of our police forces, doctors and customs officers. How many more ruined young lives are we prepared to accept before action is taken? The cost to our nation of drug-related crime and violence is enormous.

Something practical and reasonable can be done to prevent drug abuse. I propose to tackle the problem of drug abuse where it starts, in the schools. There are almost insurmountable problems in treating established addicts, so why not prevent and deter the addict to begin with? There is hardly a secondary school that has not had a drug problem. Because most addicts start on drugs while at school, the introduction of random drug testing is essential. If schoolchildren knew that they were likely to be tested at any time, they would be less likely to experiment with drugs. It is important to identify the children already on the drug train, and to offer them early help to minimise future problems.

Prevention cannot be left to schools and teachers. Their role is primarily to educate and not to police. Existing anti-drug, and indeed alcohol and tobacco, policies within schools are not working. Parents are often the last to know that their child has been abusing drugs.

Drug testing in sport has been established for years. Most of us recall the fight against it, based on the freedom and liberty of the individual, for which I have a high regard and which I support. The fine balance between protecting people's rights and freedoms and protecting them from a life of misery from drugs is a balance of conflicting freedoms, but with a full knowledge of the horrendous harm done by drugs, without hesitation I ask those who might want to oppose the Bill on civil liberty grounds to give the matter further thought or Parliament will still be trying to resolve the drug problem in schools, and perhaps quoting the Bill, in 20 years' time, with all the further drug misery that will have been caused.

I do not claim to be an expert. For information on research and dedication to fighting drugs in schools, I have relied on Dr. Hugh McCollum of Lynton, Staffordshire, who rightly claims that the problem can be reduced by certain methods, random drug testing being one. Random drug testing would involve only the collection of a urine sample. It would not involve asking private or personal questions or a medical examination, a body search, a belongings search or a blood test. Objection was voiced to testing in sports, but the principle is now fully accepted, without objection, by sports men, women and children. Let us remember that testing within sports is not limited to adults or the elite.

Testing would be done on the whole school or on sections, such as the fourth form upwards or those aged 14 upwards. There would be at least one test per school year. It is anticipated that a complete house would be tested at one go, together with an alternative group such as fourth year mathematics pupils, so that no one would be sure of not being tested at any time.

Testing would be done in such a way as to guarantee no errors. Pupils and parents should be convinced that there could be no errors. Samples would be split, with half being retained for parents and schools to double check the preliminary result. Samples would be tested only to a level where 100 per cent. concentration of the drug found could be assumed. Procedures would be such as to exclude any possibility of spiking or contamination.

The method that we would use in schools is highly effective, 100 per cent. accurate and reasonably cheap. It can detect whether a child has been taking cannabis, cocaine, crack, heroin, morphine, LSD, ecstasy, barbiturates, some hypnotic drugs and pain killers. We must all be aware of the huge threat of crack, a relatively new drug to the United Kingdom. Fortunately, it is not yet widely available and is hardly used so far. Crack is so addictive that most people become absolutely hooked, often after only trying the drug once or twice. Crack is commonplace in New York and its terrible effect can be seen in some areas of the city. In the Bronx, for example, the life expectancy of a male born today is only 38 years. The reason is drugs and related problems, such as murder, violence, AIDS, suicide, hepatitis and overdoses.

I hope that the House will support me and agree that this policy must be introduced on a wide basis within schools for the good of society. We have not only an obligation to educate our children, but a duty of care and responsibility. To carry out those responsibilities, we must do everything reasonable and practical, especially where drugs are involved.

Drugs may not always cause death, but they destroy lives. I ask for sympathetic support in the light of the overwhelming positive response I have received from parents and the media. Therefore, if there is any step, however bold, radical or innovative, that we in the House can take to reduce the risk of anyone's child succumbing to the lure of drugs, we should grasp the opportunity and take the necessary steps now.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Ray Powell, Mr. Don Dixon, Mr. Frank Haynes, Mrs. Llin Golding, Mr. Ken Eastham, Mr. Allen McKay, Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse, Mr. Stuart Bell, Mr. Tam Dalyell, Mr. Tony Banks, Mr. John McFall and Mr. Donald Coleman.

Drug Testing (Schools)

Mr. Ray Powell accordingly presented a Bill to allow random drug testing of schoolchildren; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 6 July and to be printed. [Bill 145.]

Points of Order

3.47 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As I understand it, Ministers are answerable to the House and we are in a position to table questions to Ministers. What about the new situation that has arisen, whereby the Secretary of State for Energy has become the Government co-ordinator? Am I therefore in a position to go to the Table Office and table questions directly to him about that particular aspect of Government policy?

Mr. Speaker: As I understand it, that is an unofficial arrangement.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We are well past the time of points of order. Mr. Donald Thompson.

Mr. Donald Thompson (Calder Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, on the next business. You will remember, Sir, that yesterday I asked you, on a point of order, what it would be in order to mention today with regard to some of the communities that had been community charge capped. I repeat, what are the parameters within which we can debate?

Mr. Speaker: I am pleased to clarify the position now that I have seen the motion on the Order Paper. In respect of today's motion, I see no need to relax the sub judice rule, which means that the legality of charge capping proposals should not be questioned. However, the general principle of charge capping may be referred to. Of course, when the individual orders are before the House, the sub judice rule will not apply.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it on today's business—yes? Mr. Dick Douglas.

Mr. Douglas: Mr. Speaker, last week you chided me for trying to speak from the Front Bench, and I understand that that is merely a convention of the House, and have no real disagreement with you about it. However, you will have noticed that Government Ministers restrict themselves to speaking from the Front Bench and do not take the opportunity to move to the Back Benches; they are not in suspended animation and do not become peripatetic. However, numerous Opposition Front-Bench Members live in an atmosphere of suspended animation, floating between the Front and Back Benches. I have no hesitation in accepting versatility, but I am seeking some understanding of the Speaker's restrictions on the use of the Front Bench. You will have noticed, Mr. Speaker, that there are extreme advantages in speaking from the Front Bench, particularly now that television is in the House.

Mr. Derek Foster (Bishop Auckland): It is better sitting on the Back Benches.

Mr. Douglas: My hon. Friend can go and sit there if he wants, but I notice that he occupies the Front Bench. There are extreme advantages, particularly now that television is in the House. Will you, Mr. Speaker, review

[Mr. Douglas]

your views on restricting people from using particularly the Opposition Front Bench, and allow those in the minority parties, who choose to do so when it is their day, to take advantage of glasses of water, the lecterns and the other paraphernalia that the alternative Government think are their right?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman deserves an answer, and I am pleased to clarify the position. An hon. Member must speak from the place whence he has been called. I called the hon. Gentleman from his usual seat and he then moved to the Dispatch Box. Had he simply moved to another Back-Bench seat, I would still have called him back to his original position. That is the long-established rule of the House.

I am constantly enjoined not to take any notice of the television cameras, but when I see the House of Commons on television Members look rather better against the panelling on the Back Benches than they do on the Front Benches.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You may have noticed that the Labour party has this morning denounced the All-Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation as being dominated by the Trotskyist Militant Tendency. Has the Leader of the Opposition asked to come to the House to make a statement on the withdrawal of the Whip from those Labour Members who support that Trotskyist Militant organisation and are refusing to pay the poll tax?

Mr. Speaker: I do not receive requests to make such statements from the Leader of the Opposition. With a little ingenuity, that is the sort of matter that could perhaps be raised in today's debate.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): Further to the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), Mr. Speaker. It is a matter of concern to the House that hon. Members should be able to question the new Government co-ordinator who is responsible for Government funds. Before the previous election, Central Office increased fivefold the amount of money spent trying to explain Government policy. The legislature should be able to challenge the Executive on that expenditure through questions on the Order Paper to the Government co-ordinator.

Mr. Speaker: I understand that a probing question to the Prime Minister has already been put down on that matter and that it is in order.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. For better or worse, I seek your guidance on whether an hon. Member has the right to propose amendments to a Bill which is to be scrutinised by the Select Committee on Unopposed Bills.

Mr. Speaker: Without knowing the particular Bill to which the hon. Gentleman is referring, it is difficult for me to give an instant ruling on the matter. Will the hon. Gentleman write to me or, even better, come and see me?

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Further to your ruling on today's debate and the sub judice rule, may I take it from that that when the orders are laid each will be debated separately?

Mr. Speaker: I do not know, because they have not yet been laid. That will depend on whether any agreement is reached. The orders are statutory instruments, so they are not subject to the sub judice rule, which was the purport of my ruling.

Opposition Day

[13TH ALLOTTED DAY, 1ST PART]

Local Government Finance

3.53 pm

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): I beg to move,

That this House believes that the Government should take immediate action to bring help to hard-pressed poll tax payers this year and backdate it to the introduction of the poll tax in Scotland, and should seek to change the tax so that from next year it is directly related to each individual's ability to pay.

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Taylor: It would have been a tragedy had you not, Mr. Speaker.

I welcome the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities to his first debate on this important topic. I have been engaged in debates on the subject for a long time, having represented the Social and Liberal Democrats when the Local Government Finance Bill went through the House and subsequently. I hope that the Minister will find it an interesting topic, though it will be a difficult one for him.

The Minister was appointed to his new post at a time when the local elections were a topic of immense debate among all parties. People were greatly influenced by the impact of the poll tax and believed that the Government were to blame for it. In the vast majority of cases, votes fell away from Conservative candidates, though not from all: it is interesting to note what happened in London.

In the post-election period, as we survey the wreckage, it is important to consider what the Government said immediately before the elections about the need for change, and what is happening. Certain Conservative Members, such as the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), had a lot to say on the subject before the local elections. They are noticeable by their absence today. I hope that that is not a reflection of opinion within the Cabinet. We are told that a special Cabinet committee has been set up to consider what urgent amendments to the poll tax need to be made to bring order and fairness to a system which, only two months after coming into force, has proved itself to be unaccountable, unfair and inefficient. According to reports last week in *The Times*, in some areas as many as 50 per cent. of those liable have not yet paid any poll tax. That is a measure of the difficulties and problems that face the Government.

According to figures published by the Government and others, money has been transferred from those who could least afford it—the majority of the poor who have lost out—to the majority of the already rich who have gained from the imposition of the poll tax. However, when I spoke to people on their doorsteps during the local elections, I found that those who have gained are often the most embarrassed about the effects of the poll tax and that they do not support it. That is remarkable. I have heard Conservative Members say that that has also been their experience. It is unusual for a tax to cause embarrassment and to be rejected by those who have gained from its imposition.

The motion provides the House with an opportunity to consider the alternatives that may be put before the Cabinet committee and to debate them, rather than that a decision should be taken be the committee and sprung upon the House. The problems and drawbacks connected with some of the alternatives can now be aired.

The official Opposition are supposedly taking the lead in suggesting alternatives to the British public. It is therefore worth turning to the Labour party's alternative, or lack of it, to the poll tax.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Taylor: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman when I have dealt with the Labour party's alternative, or lack of it. He must first listen to what I have to say on the subject.

The Labour party's alternative has proved sketchy in the extreme. No figures and no details have been given. Throughout the local election campaign no facts were put forward by the Opposition. It is at least an improvement that they have now put forward some general ideas, which is more than they did throughout the entire proceedings on the Local Government Finance Bill in 1988.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I wanted to intervene on the matter that the hon. Gentleman raised a moment ago. He talked about substantial reductions in the rates paid by people in various parts of the country. Is he aware that the rates bill of thousands of households in Westminster, Kensington, Chelsea and central London has fallen from £2,000 or £3,000 last year to but a few hundred pounds and that it is not uncommon for their new poll tax bill to be only 10 or 20 per cent. of their rates last year? Is not that quite shocking?

Mr. Taylor: It is certainly shocking. I have made the point that the poll tax transfers money from the already poor to the already rich.

The Labour party's lack of an alternative is a genuine cause for concern as the Cabinet committee would undoubtedly consider an alternative had the Labour party produced one but it did not. In the *Evening Standard* on 6 April, the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) mentioned a floor tax. We have heard about the possibility of a roof tax, which is seen as a modernised version of the rates, but it may be based on the cost of rebuilding houses and flats. In *The Independent* on 6 April the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) stated:

"We are proposing a modernised version of the rating system, a locally based property tax in which the poundage will be set by the local authority in accordance with local property values, as with rates, but updated and made fairer by being related to ability to pay"—

but he does not tell us how. He also confirmed that Labour was considering basing the valuation on the square footage multiplied by regional rebuilding costs as an alternative to house prices.

Labour is still undecided about whether bills would apply to individuals or to households. All that is in addition to its rejection of its 1988 plans for a mixture of a local income tax system and a property system. Nobody could understand how that would work. It simply amounted to an attempt to impose two taxes where one would do.

Mr. Robert Hayward (Kingswood): Is not it the clearest demonstration of the Labour party's embarrassment at its

[Mr. Robert Hayward]

inadequacy in producing an alternative that there are only nine hon. Members on the Labour Benches—the same number as are on the other Opposition Benches? The Labour party cannot produce the Members to put forward the alternatives.

Mr. Taylor: I suspect that the Labour party prefers to stick with only nine different views rather than putting forward any more.

I am afraid that there is no consistency among Conservative Members either. I suspect that most Conservative Members take the view that some change needs to be introduced. I have scarcely heard a Conservative Member who has not argued that the poll tax needs amendment. Some argue rather more than others and I shall concentrate on those who have put forward the most interesting or the most widely publicised alternatives.

Certainly the most publicised alternative recently has been that put forward by the right hon. Member for Henley. He said:

"most people in my party now agree that it"—

meaning the poll tax—

"needs considerable modifications."

He outlined an extremely complicated set of amendments which few people believe to be practical. He argued for a fundamental reform of the local government system, including directly elected mayors and value-for-money audits. He suggested that local authorities would be free to set their own budgets, but that if those budgets exceeded a sum set by the Government they should immediately be subject to election. One wonders what would happen immediately following an election putting a local authority in power and it subsequently set a budget on the basis of that election. Would it go straight into another election? If the same council or one even more likely to exceed the Government's calculation of the need to spend is elected, does that solve the problem? I suspect that the Treasury would not feel that that was adequate simply because the electorate had put a high-spending council back in power. What action does the right hon. Member for Henley suggest should be taken when the electorate casts votes one way, but the council that is elected does not reflect the majority opinion in the council chamber as a result of the electoral system?

More interestingly, the right hon. Gentleman also proposes specific changes to the poll tax itself. He makes suggestions about the transitional arrangements. Our motion refers to "immediate" short-term help to those in desperate need. The right hon. Member for Henley says that there should be no withdrawal of safety net support next year. He says that the transitional relief scheme must be improved and expanded, and calculated with greater reference to actual charges, not notional figures of assumed spending. I entirely support his comment that the Government's standard spending assessments must reflect reality in a wider range of authorities. We were told by Ministers when the SSAs were first developed that they were intended to simplify and make visible the local government support system, and to get away from the complications of the old rate support grant. We were told that, under that system, one fed in figures and got them out until the computer came up with a set acceptable to the Government, and that no one knew how the figures were generated. The standard spending assessment has not achieved its aim, as the right hon. Member for Henley was right to point out.

The most crucial element of the right hon. Gentleman's argument—and several other important Conservative Members have put the same argument—is for a form of banding and for a move towards a system that pays some attention to ability to pay above the very basic level of those who are entitled to rebates under the present system. The right hon. Member for Henley says:

"Banding upwards can in practice, in the short term, only be based on income. There are no insurmountable obstacles, although there will be crudities and criticisms . . . The Government should instruct its civil servants to work up proposals based on the assumption that everyone will pay something, but that the significantly better off, by which I mean top rate taxpayers, will contribute more."

Is the right hon. Gentleman suggesting that that is a long-term or a short-term solution? He says that a banding system should be used only in the short term. If it is not his long-term solution, what is?

The fundamental problem with a banding system is, by definition, that it goes up in jumps. It is far closer to our proposals for a local income tax system than the Government's proposals, but it would go up in jumps in the same way as the national insurance scheme. If one is unfortunate enough to cross the barrier between one level of income and another, a pay increase will make one worse off. That is the inherent problem of a banding system.

A banding system is only roughly related to ability to pay because no attention is paid to the variation in income within each band. The right hon. Member for Henley seems blissfully unaware of those problems, or perhaps he simply dismisses them as "crudities" and "criticisms". If the right hon. Gentleman believes that a system should be tied to the ability to pay, why does not he simply adopt a policy for a local income tax system, which is the logical extension of that position?

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): I am sure that the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) will never hesitate to bow to the experience of my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine). We accept the hon. Gentleman's expertise in the matter. Will he tell the House therefore, when he is considering the available alternatives, where his party stands on unitary local government and where it stands on the ability of the electorate to get its hands on county councils through the introduction of a third rotating annual election? Those matters are crucial for my constituents in Shrewsbury, who have been handled in a most duplicitous way by his party's supporters. They want to know where the parliamentary Liberal party stands because they have been unable to find out where the local Liberal party stands.

Mr. Taylor: We are about to publish a document that will answer the hon. Gentleman's question about local government tiers, and I recommend that he reads it. There is only one way of making local authorities accountable, and that is proportional representation. In numerous areas, although the majority of people voted for one party, another party is running the local authority, and while that remains the case, no one can argue that there is genuine accountability, because the wishes of the people are not being reflected in the way in which the local authority is constituted.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): I think that the hon. Gentleman will accept that that is not the case in Cornwall, which is his county and mine. In effect, the Liberal Democrats are the leading party on the county council. Does he really think that the Liberal Democrats were accurately reflecting the wishes of the people in Cornwall when they increased their budget by more than 18 per cent., with all the consequences that that brought for the charge payers of Cornwall?

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman knows very well that we have one of the lowest poll tax rates in the country —substantially lower than in neighbouring Conservative-controlled Plymouth and Devon. Moreover, it is pretty rich for the hon. Gentleman, who only a few days ago shared a platform with me and argued that we needed to spend more on our local schools, to press for cuts in the local authority's budget, which would have meant school closures in our area. The hon. Gentleman knows that I would love to have a debate on Cornwall, but now is not the time for it.

Two Other Conservative Members have argued for banding.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Taylor: I want to make progress, if I may. The hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) tabled the amendment which almost succeeded in introducing a banding system when the poll tax arrangements were originally debated. He said:

"To tinker at the margins will only make a bad situation worse."

I agree with him. The hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), who is in his place at the moment, said:

"If one believes the concept is structurally flawed, as I do tinkering does not tackle the problem. The basic problem is that it is not a charge for services at all; it is a tax."

I agree with him, too.

Both hon. Members have argued for a graduated or banded tax.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Taylor: I will give way to the hon. Lady when I have finished my point.

The hon. Member for Acton is present. Why does he argue for a banding system, which would create poverty traps and all the difficulties that we now have at the low end of the national insurance scale, when we have the opportunity to introduce a local tax system? I heard what the hon. Gentleman said in an interview on the radio this morning, in which I was also involved. He suggested that there would be no accountability because a local income tax would be levied through the tax system. But under the system that we propose, at the end of the year every local income tax payer will either receive a rebate, if he lives in a low-spending area or pay the difference, if he lives in a high-spending area. Few things are more likely to make a local authority accountable than a system that resulted in a local income tax payer in one area receiving a bill while his next-door neighbour in another received a rebate.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that sheer bureaucracy adds much to the costs of extravagant councils such as Lancashire county council? Is he aware that, although Hampshire county council has 125,000 more people in its area, it manages to run it with 10,000 fewer staff? Does not that highlight the appalling burden on the people of Lancashire, whose Labour-controlled county council has increased its expenditure by 176 per cent. since 1981? This year alone, the council has increased its budget by £123 million, or £81 per inhabitant.

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Lady pleads a special case, and I do not want to comment in detail on that part of the country. However, she should consider the needs of those areas and the services that are provided. She should also consider the support among the public for what is happening there. She must remember that the cost of introducing and administering the poll tax, including the tens of thousands of people required to implement it, amounts to between £650 million and £750 million.

I want to consider the options available under the Government's review of the poll tax. The Government have canvassed the possibility of increasing central Government's grants to local authorities. However, an extra £1 billion would save each adult only £28. It would also miss those people most in need of help. It is hard to believe that the Government will follow that route. The cost of making that option effective on any scale would put the Government off.

The Government could also consider transferring the control and financing of the police, education and fire services. However, that would have a knock-on impact on income tax levels nationally. It would also centralise education, which is a service that most hon. Members believe should remain at the discretion of local authorities and be able to respond to local needs.

The Government could also improve the transitional relief scheme which is currently very limited in its application. If that relief were extended now and retrospectively in Scotland, it would target money more effectively than increased grants. When the Government announced the transitional relief scheme, they said that no one would be more than £3 a week worse off. That has not happened because local authorities have not been able to set poll tax levels at the level that the Government argued that they should. If the Government are to respond to the needs of the most hard up, they should consider extending transitional relief. They could also extend it to all adults.

The Government have also considered improving the benefits system which targets money, although less efficiently. Under that option, the minimum poll tax payable could be reduced from 20 per cent. to 10 per cent. However, the problem is that all those options simply tinker at the margins and do not tackle the fundamental problem, as the hon. Member for Acton has said.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): I do not want to apologise for the standard spending assessment system of which I have been critical in my constituency, particularly with regard to its impact in the shire counties. I am sure that Cornwall and Somerset have similar problems with the SSA system. However, will the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) acknowledge that both the noble Lord who initially made the statement in another place and my right hon. Friend who is now the Secretary of State for Wales, but who previously had responsibility for the community charge, made it clear that the £3 a week limit extended only in so far as local authorities spent in terms of the somewhat fictitious SSA limits?

Mr. Taylor: The problem is that, when the public heard the announcement, they did not see the fine details. That was inevitable. Whether intentionally or otherwise, they were grossly misled and that is one reason why hon. Members have been attacked by the public, who have said that they thought that they would be protected. The public did not understand what was happening. Moreover, as the hon. Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) said, the SSAs are fictitious and very few of us believe that they amount to anything more than that.

The Government could also relate the poll tax to income in some form, perhaps through a banding system. However, I have already explained why I believe that that option would not be effective.

Sir George Young (Ealing, Acton): The motion that the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) moved asks the House to relate the poll tax to ability to pay from next year. He must know that in no way could the kind of system that he advocates be introduced next year. However, it is possible to move away from the present system, with the flat rate, to a banded rate from next year. Whatever the arguments against the scheme put by the hon. Member for Truro—and there are powerful ones—there are strong arguments in terms of realism for accepting the present position and changing that instead of trying to turn the whole system upside down and starting again with the hon. Gentleman's proposal. We can overcome the objections to which the hon. Gentleman referred by having more than three bands to remove the discontinuities in the system.

Mr. Taylor: The more bands there are, the closer we get to a local income tax system. However, as we move from one band to the next there is a problem in that people end up worse off. That may be to a lesser degree, but that problem remains. Nevertheless if the hon. Member for Acton is right and a local income tax system could not be in place for next year, the Government should consider that option. However, our advice is that setting aside the legislative process—of course, in Scotland with the UBR it was done extremely quickly—the introduction of local income tax and providing absolutely accurate income figures district by district would take only about six months. The process is not as long as the Government have claimed.

The final alternative canvassed by the Government is the capping of most or all authorities. On average, 1 per cent. of local spending would reduce the charge by 3 or 4 per cent. To reduce the total poll tax bill to the £10 billion suggested would require cash cuts of about 7 per cent. in local budgets in 1990. Cuts in real terms are nearer 15 per cent. Such capping would be a disaster for local services and would take away the very principle that local government exists to defend—local flexibility—and would be a grotesque centralisation of power.

I have referred to several matters that we could introduce in the short term. I was interested in the point raised by the hon. Member for Acton, but let me now tackle the local income tax system and the specific criticisms that have been made about it. I do not wish to go into great detail, but I shall refer to the four or five criticisms that have commonly been made and say why I believe that they are based on a fiction of what a local income tax system would be.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): I assume that a local income tax system would be based on a person's income or ability to pay, just as the national income tax system is. If the hon. Gentleman does not believe in equalisation rates, how do we come to terms with the problems of an area such as mine where there is low earning and high unemployment? A local income tax system without equalisation rates would be disastrous.

Mr. Taylor: My answer is very simple. As with the present poll tax system or the old rates system, we would have a central Government grant system that would be specifically tailored to a local income tax system, the major element of which would be to ensure that we levied the same levels of income tax to provide the same levels of service in different areas. In other words, we would take account of income levels in each district. That is what our figures are based on. The calculation could be refined further by an expanded Inland Revenue survey of 500,000 individuals to make sure that the basis was accurate. That is not difficult to do and it is similar to the present grant support system.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Would the local income tax that the hon. Gentleman's party is proposing be based on taxing income after national tax allowances have been claimed?

Mr. Taylor: It would be based on precisely the same tax allowances as the national income tax system.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: After allowances?

Mr. Taylor: After allowances. The basis of the local income tax system that we propose—it is not the one that the Government talk about, which comes as no surprise, because ours makes more sense—is that we would set a local income tax rate to provide services. Under our system, the range is between 3 and 8 per cent., and the average is 4·7 per cent. across the nation. We would then levy nationally a standard local income tax of 5 per cent., the nearest full figure to the average. That would be collected through the existing PAYE taxation structure with no local variation at all. It would simply be collected at the national rate. At the end of the year, on the basis of the tax paid and the relevant local area details that are already held by the Inland Revenue—people would receive a letter saying, "You live in an area that has a higher than average income tax, and this is the amount that you owe," or, "You live in an area with a lower amount, and here is your rebate cheque." That is the basis of the system.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is not there a flaw in that? I did not realise that there might be a flaw of this nature. The flaw is that one is taxing income after one has been able to use all one's allowances on the great number of Government schemes that have been introduced, such as small business investment or whatever, after those tax allowances have been taken into account. Is there a danger that, in effect, people might fix their income after tax by way of using all those mechanisms to reduce their ability to pay local income tax to local authorities?

Mr. Taylor: That is a criticism of the income tax system and the allowances that operate under it, and it applies equally to national and local income tax. It is for the Government to decide the allowances, and a Government

run by the hon. Gentleman would set different allowances from a Government run by Conservative Members or by me.

It is said that our system would drive people out of the inner cities. That is not a relevant criticism because the grant support system would ensure that it did not happen. It is said that the administration costs would be unduly high. We would use the existing Inland Revenue structure and save the £750 million that is involved in the bureaucracy of the poll tax and in the process get rid of all the bureaucrats involved. The extras needed for the Inland Revenue would be small because the basic structure already exists.

Sweden and Canada already operate such combined systems. The collection costs in terms of the tax take are 30 per cent. in one case and 50 per cent. in the other—lower than the costs in this country because of the introduction into the system of an incentive for individuals to make their own tax returns.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Taylor: I will tackle some of the likely questions that hon. Members may have, and then give way if they still wish to intervene.

It is said that the system of collection would be complex. But our proposed method is already being used simply and cheaply in many countries. Moreover, it is also already being used simply and cheaply in this country for national income tax, so that a new complex system would not need to be introduced.

It is claimed that local income tax would be difficult to enforce. Those who are introducing the poll tax can hardly argue along those lines because they have allowed for much higher default rates than occurred under the old rating system, for example, and we are experiencing the much higher default rates that are occurring in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): I have listened with interest to the hon. Gentleman's argument thus far, but two points arise. First, he has not addressed his remarks to anything concerned with the efficiency of local government. In Lancashire, for example, we identify the fact that the community charge would be £60 a head lower if the local authority had pursued a prudent and efficient budget. What pressures would the hon. Gentleman's party bring to bear on a local authority to improve its efficiency?

Secondly, the hon. Gentleman says that under his system people would get a supplementary bill if a council overspent. How could somebody plan a domestic budget with such an open-ended commitment to spend? Let us remember that some Labour authorities love to spend public money.

Mr. Taylor: People will not receive a supplementary bill if a local authority overspends. The amount is taken from the local income tax rates, so people know the amount in advance, because they know at what rate the local income tax has been set. If one is paying 5 per cent. and the local income tax rate is 5·3 per cent., one will have to pay that 0·3 per cent. of taxable income at the end of the year, a bill which for most people will not be nearly as significant as the poll tax bill.

An example of that is that in the Minister's constituency of Enfield, Southgate the average household is currently being asked to pay a poll tax bill of £658. Under our system of local income tax, which has been fully set out, that same household with average income would pay in total £356. In Southampton, Itchen, an average household poll tax bill of £614 would become a local income tax bill of £303.

Those figures show the advantages that would accrue to people, although some would, of course, pay more. Hon. Members would pay more and the Minister would pay a lot more, but he can afford to pay. Judging from the smile on his face, he, too, thinks that he can afford it. That is the nature of a system which is based on ability to pay. We ask for less from those who can afford less and more from those who can afford more. We retain local accountability through end-of-year adjustments, as I have explained, and at a stroke we get rid of the bureaucracy of the system that has been introduced by the poll tax.

4.29 pm

The Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities (Mr. Michael Portillo): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'believes that most adults should contribute towards the cost of local services with relief for the less well off; welcomes the embodiment of those principles in the community charge and notes in particular that 10 million people have received bills reduced by rebates whilst 7·5 million have been protected by transitional relief; welcomes the willingness of the Government to listen to constructive suggestions for further improving the new arrangements; and contrasts the fairness and clarity of the community charge with the injustice and impracticability of a local income tax favoured by the Social and Liberal Democrats and the total lack of any clear proposals from the Labour Party.'.

I begin by saying a warm "thank you" to the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor), both for his kind words of welcome and introduction and for what I thought was a thoroughly entertaining speech. I also thank the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) for writing to me to welcome me to this new subject.

The title of this debate, chosen by the Social and Liberal Democratic party, invites the House to consider amendments to, and alternatives to, the community charge. I am glad to do both. I intend to demonstrate that the community charge is the best of the options for raising that part of local authority funding that should be raised locally. Moreover, the House will know that the Government are considering whether any amendments to the operation of the charge should be made to improve its working.

I should like today to take the House through the options for raising local authority finance. Our discussion must begin with the rates. Labour is supposedly against the rates. The SLD describes them in an early-day motion as an "injustice"; I thoroughly agree—and we have abolished them.

Perhaps on a subject where we are unanimous I need not dwell too long, except to make a couple of points. First, the rates were grossly unfair. I make that point because it may help us to colour our view of the fairness of the community charge. Secondly, the unfairness of the rates derived mainly from the fact that property values are no proxy for wealth or income and any system based on property will repeat the injustice of the domestic rates.

Mr. John Lee (Pendle): Many of us, especially those of us from the north of England, remember my hon. Friend's success in saving the Settle-Carlisle line, so we take an optimistic view of his new appointment. One reason that

[Mr. John Lee]

hon. Members such as myself, who represent constituencies in the north-west, are particularly unhappy about the present community charge is the gap between the amount that a household may pay collectively under the community charge, despite transitional relief and the safety net, and the very low rates that we have paid historically. I hope that my hon. Friend will consider that aspect, during his speech, but especially during the review.

Mr. Portillo: I intended to continue by telling my hon. Friend that we shall, of course, listen to suggestions that are made to us. Indeed, I have been listening to suggestions already. My hon. Friend well knows that part of the problem in Pendle, which has a community charge of about £299, is that Lancashire increased its spending by 20 per cent. and Pendle increased its income by 22·8 per cent. I know that my hon. Friend understands that, and recognises that it has added to the problems that his area faces.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: When he is considering amendments to the community charge, will my hon. Friend bear in mind the fact that it is absolutely no good giving more money to extravagant councils such as Lancashire county council? Does he accept that any money that is dispersed must go direct to the charge payers, such as pensioner wives or the mothers of young children, so that they get the benefit because, if it is not, those bandits in county hall in Preston will simply swallow the loot and will not give any abatements whatsoever in community charge? The benefit must go directly to the charge payers.

Mr. Portillo: I understand my hon. Friend's point. As she has said, Lancashire has increased its spending by about 20 per cent. My hon. Friend knows that Lancaster has increased its income by nearly 28 per cent. by comparison, the other council with which my hon. Friend deals, Wyre, which is under Conservative control, has been more moderate in its increase, which was just under 14 per cent.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Should we not be fair and put the figures in the proper perspective? The Minister has referred to Lancashire and to the increases there. If the standard spending assessment for Derbyshire had been calculated on the same basis as that for Westminster, we would not have had any poll tax in Derbyshire; we would have handed out £309 to every single poll tax payer. We would not have been collecting money. Because of the different political complexion in Derbyshire, our poll tax is much higher than Westminster's. Let us all have the same calculation as the one that resulted in the bribery at Westminster and Wandsworth; then there will be no complaints.

Mr. Portillo: I do not know what the hon. Gentleman is referring to. The standing spending assessments were worked out on the same basis throughout the country, and, as he will know, in Bolsover the SSA is nearly 15 per cent. higher than the grant-related expenditure figure under the old system. The increase in income in Derbyshire is 19·5 per cent., while Bolsover has increased its income by 17·3 per cent. That is what has made the difference.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Is not the point that, in local government, as in national government, the Labour party is always highly profligate with public money? The rates in Ealing in 1987 increased by 65 per cent.——

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): What was the money spent on?

Mr. Greenway: It was spent on, for instance, homosexual activities and parties for lesbians. Certainly no letters to the town hall were answered. While the rates and the community charge have increased in Ealing under Labour—*[Interruption.]* Labour Members may shout, but, despite those increases, efficiency went down, the streets were not properly swept, expenditure on education was reduced and people had a disgraceful deal. They always do from Labour.

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend makes his point extremely well. The latest increase in income in Ealing appears almost moderate in comparison, at some 14·5 per cent. My hon. Friend does well to point out that that increase was on top of the horrendous increase in the previous year's rates, which resulted in a community charge in Ealing of £435. My hon. Friend will be satisfied that those who were responsible for those increases have received their come-uppance.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): My hon. Friend the Minister made his reputation in the Department of Health and Social Security by targeting public assistance on those most in need. Many people in low-spending areas such as the one that I represent, who are just above the line of eligibility for rebates but by no stretch of the imagination well off, now have substantial difficulty in paying their community charge because of low rateable values leading to their previous light contributions. Surely that has major implications for transitional relief, and for next year's rebate. Can we look to the Minister to help those people, who are finding it difficult to make ends meet?

Mr. Portillo: I assure my hon. Friend that I shall weigh carefully what he has said. I shall continue to listen to him, and to other hon. Members who intervene. He referred to targeting. I ask him to go to his local authority and target this point on it: at present his local charge payers are contributing £44 a year each to the safety net. It would be excellent if that money could be used to bring the community charge down next year, which would greatly help all Chichester's community charge payers.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The Minister should ignore the blandishments of his hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman), who is the only hon. Member for Lancashire who publicly advocates cuts in public services in her constituency, and stands condemned throughout the community for so doing.

I have done some work on the question of the Westminster settlement. Why was that settlement inflated by a substantial amount of money for flood relief? Is not the calculation on enhanced population for Westminster grossly inflating its central Government grant? Would not an inquiry reveal that the Westminster settlement was nothing but a fix to get Lady Porter out of a corner?

Mr. Portillo: The criteria used for flood relief works were applied nationally. It is true that, in the first year, the criteria are particularly helpful to Westminster. They will

not be particularly helpful to Westminster in the second year. The criteria were given to us by local authority associations and certainly were not skewed to any particular authority. That still leaves the hon. Gentleman with a great deal of explaining to do about why other Conservative authorities that did not have the benefit of flood damage relief, such as Wandsworth, set such low community charges and are so commended for their good management.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): It is time that the Labour lie was nailed. It is undeniable that both Wandsworth and Westminster received substantially less external aggregate grant than any other inner-London borough. The net result was that an authority such as Lambeth, which is Labour-controlled, and which received grant of £324 a head more than Wandsworth, set a community charge of £350 more than Wandsworth.

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend is right that Wandsworth and Westminster were towards the bottom of the list of the amount received from Government by inner-London boroughs. That is a perfectly valid point and I am glad that my hon. Friend has made it.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): The Minister knows that I have respect for him. I ask him to think of a new way of calculating standard spending assessments. Could he not suggest that, instead of the Government coming up with the formula—which would be open to the allegation of fixing, whoever was in government—they could offer the local authorities the chance to agree it? If they can agree on a formula, that should be the one by which grant is given to local authorities. If they cannot agree, the Government will, as always, have to make the decision. Would that not be a fairer system, less open to allegations that the Government had distorted the figures?

Mr. Portillo: The method that the hon. Gentleman suggests is that which we attempt to use. We get together with all the local authority associations and try to agree the criteria with them. The hon. Gentleman will recognise that different local authorities have different views. Even the local authority associations, which represent different sorts of local authorities, have different views. We do our best to agree on the criteria. I am listening to representations made to me about standard spending assessments that seem to fall short of expectations or perceived reality in some way.

The problem with the rates was that 40 per cent. of those in properties above average rateable value had incomes below the average. A person on low income could, and often did, pay more to the local authority than other people on higher incomes in the same area. Under community charge, that simply cannot happen.

Furthermore, the rates were paid by only half the adult population and that half was selected arbitrarily—so arbitrarily that it consisted largely of widows and pensioners, but excluded many wage and salary earners. It was therefore possible for some local authorities to follow expensive, and expansive, policies knowing that they would be paid for by that ill-chosen minority of the population.

The second major option for local government funding which I ask the House to consider is the community charge, with any amendments which the Government may propose. The basic principle of the community charge is that nearly every adult should contribute to the costs of local services. As the charge has settled down in Scotland and is settling down in England and Wales, I believe that that basic principle that everyone should contribute is well accepted. We do not seek that the charge payer carry all the costs of the local services provided. In principle, we look to the charge payer in England, for example, to contribute only about a quarter on average. The balance comes from revenue support grants, the uniform business rate and the £2·75 billion worth of community charge rebate, transitional relief and income support payments, all funded from central Government. So businesses and national taxpayers meet three quarters of the cost. That is the measure of the subsidy from the common pot to the individual.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): Does the Minister accept that the tax has settled down in Scotland to be a costly, ineffective, bureaucratic mess which is hated by the population and not paid by almost 1 million Scots? If he is worried about the burden of extra costs on poll tax payers, should he not worry about the burden of the poll tax itself? In Scotland last year, there were about 2 million changes in the register in one year alone. That is a foretaste of what is to come in England. In London, annually updating the register will be a bureaucratic mess. That puts extra unnecessary costs on poll tax payers.

Mr. Portillo: My information from Scotland is that the number of people who have paid or started to pay the community charge——

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): For last year?

Mr. Portillo: Yes, for last year—is comparable with the number of people who paid rates. Collecting the rates was no easy matter either in Scotland. The extra burden of expenditure for collecting the community charge is well worth it, as we have achieved a fairer and more widespread system.

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): First, will the Minister clarify the statistics that he just gave on the amount of local authority spending met from the poll tax? He said that it was a quarter. The figures that I have been given in written answers show that it is almost a third. Secondly, he said that three quarters of the spending is funded from central Government, but he has included the aggregate external funding, which is part of the uniform business rate.

Mr. Portillo: My response to the hon. Gentleman's second point is explicit in what I said. On his first point, I said that we sought that the charge payer should contribute a quarter. I recognise that, with the overspending which has occurred among local authorities and which has raised community charges, the percentage is a little higher than the Government looked to raise from the community charge payer.

We have often made the point that the citizen who pays income tax and full community charge can pay many times more towards local authority spending than his neighbour on maximum rebate for the community charge who pays no income tax. We have repeated that a household in the top 10 per cent. of income will pay 15 times as much as a household in the bottom 10 per cent. of income.

[Mr. Portillo]

I am sorry that my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, North-West (Mr. Grylls) is not in his place today. He suggested a most fruitful and graphic way of illustrating my point in an article published recently in the *Daily Mail*. In the article, he showed what various typical people in our society would contribute to local government finance, on the assumption that part of income tax is used to finance the local authorities.

Of course, the figures cannot be exact. However, I have no reason to believe that they are far from the truth. My hon. Friend found that the student paying a 20 per cent. contribution would pay £57·20 if the full charge were £278. The gasman earning £12,000 would contribute nearly £1,000 in tax and community charge. The airline pilot on £50,000 salary would pay in about £3,250. The barrister on £100,000 would pay more than £7,500. The advertising agency chief on £200,000 would contribute more than £15,500.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: The Minister knows that this is a good debating point. Is it not equally the case that local government central support grant comes out of VAT and Customs and Excise payments? In that case, the figures would show that those on the lowest incomes paid rather more than they appeared to pay under the poll tax.

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, North-West made an allowance for the proportion of Government revenue represented by income tax. He included only those figures. If he went on to include VAT, on the assumption that people who are better off buy more goods, the proportion that came from the better-off would tend to rise. Certainly the absolute cash sums would tend to rise. That would support my point, rather than the hon. Gentleman's.

I firmly believe that the community charge fulfils the widely recognised need for a system in which nearly everyone contributes. With its rebate system, which is much more generous than the predecessor which applied to rates, it provides for 10 million people on the lowest incomes. With transitional relief, it softens the change for 7·5 million people. With the contributions from the taxpayer and non-domestic rates, providing a large subsidy to the community charge payer out of the national graduated tax systems, I believe that we have a system which is soundly based.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): The Minister has had a great deal of advance publicity about being a whiz kid. Can he explain how a 20 per cent. minimum payment of the community charge can be more generous than a 100 per cent. rebate on the rates that some people once got? That was the scheme previous to the scheme introduced by the Minister's predecessors, which allowed for a 20 per cent. minimum rebate on the rates. Why is an 80 per cent. rebate more generous than a 100 per cent. rebate?

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Earlier in the debate, I asked Mr. Speaker about speakers from the Front Bench. I know that Opposition Members are extremely flexible, but how can an expert in foreign affairs who speaks from the Opposition Front Bench suddenly become an expert on local government finance when sitting on the Back Benches?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): That is a matter for the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), not for the Chair.

Mr. Portillo: Some time ago, we changed the maximum rebate on rates from 100 per cent. to 80 per cent., as we rightly recognised that everyone should make a contribution to local authority finance. At the same time, we made a contribution to the income support system—from memory, an extra £500,000 went into the income support system—to cover the average 20 per cent. of rates.

The community charge will succeed too in its aim of establishing local accountability. That has already happened, mainly in those places where there are unitary authorities, where the councils faced elections and where Conservatives offered a low community charge to their electorate. Such local accountability was also established in one area, where the SLD offered a reasonable community charge to its electors in Tower Hamlets.

Local accountability has moderated community charge increases in the second year in Scotland. As the workings of the charge are better understood, it will bring improved accountability everywhere. Next year in England and Wales, with none of the distractions that we have had this year in changing the system, the electors will know that the level of community charge imposed by their local authorities is down to those local authorities alone.

Mr. Allen McKay: As the Minister is talking about the electorate, he should consider my area. The council stands for election every year, so it is accountable. Every councillor attends his surgery each Saturday and is therefore accountable. That council ran its election campaign against the [redacted] tax and poll tax capping—and it won 22 seats out of 22.

Mr. Portillo: Because the authority of which the hon. Gentleman speaks is subject to a capping proposal, I must be careful about making any comment about it. The hon. Gentleman and the council have had the opportunity to make representations to us about that proposal and I am glad that they did so. When the people voted, they knew about the proposal to impose a cap on the authority. One simply cannot know what effect that had on the electors.

Mr. McKay *rose—*

Mr. Portillo: If I have upset the hon. Gentleman, I shall, of course, give way.

Mr. McKay: It takes a lot more than the hon. Gentleman to upset me. We ran the council election campaign against poll tax capping and we won 22 seats out of 22. Such is the effect of poll tax capping.

Mr. Portillo: I enjoyed my opportunity of discussing this subject with the hon. Gentleman when he visited me, but I do not want to be drawn further into a debate about an authority for which a capping proposal has been made.

The introduction of the community charge, the uniform business rate, the standard spending assessments, the transitional reliefs and the entire new structure represents a major new change—a change from something that all parties in the House argued was wrong, but which only the Government have been willing to put right. I am not

surprised that in such a major upheaval there are many who think that there are things that need to be adjusted and put right. I have listened to what my hon. Friends, as well as those in local government, have said about that. I shall listen again today, and in doing so I shall attempt to distinguish between those points that are just a symptom of change, which can and should sort themselves out, and those points which represent genuine anomalies. I thank my hon. Friends for their help in that process.

The third option for local authority finance is not to pay the community charge, and to break the law. That policy is espoused by 28 hon. Members in the Labour party. How legislators in a democracy can advocate breaking the law is beyond my comprehension. I understand one thing, however: non-payment by some will mean higher payments by others Those who do not pay will often not be the poorest, and those who must pay more will often not be the richest. If there is any concern about justice, that cause will not be advanced by non-payment, because non-payment is the biggest injustice of them all. When the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) comes to speak for the Labour party, I would appreciate it if he set out his party"s attitude to non-payment, to those non-paying Members of Parliament and to those hon. Members who attend rallies organised by the Anti-Poll Tax Federation.

The fourth option for local government finance is the roof tax. The House and the country are waiting upon Labour's alternatives to the community charge. Before the hon. Member for Brightside gets up to tell me that it is a modern property tax related to the ability to pay or whatever other sugar-coated, all-things-to-all-men phrase is currently in vogue, what we are looking for today from him is detail. I do not mean complicated details, but simple ones such as who is meant to pay it.

The last time that that question was posed to the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), he replied enigmatically that that would be a matter of "maximum choice". Suppose the hon. Gentleman and I went out to dinner, the bill arrived and we tried to decide who would pay it. If that was left to a matter of maximum choice, we would be there all night trying to decide who would pay. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Foulkes: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I want to hear the Minister, but I cannot because of the traitor below the Gangway.

Mr. Douglas: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Please ask the hon. Gentleman to withdraw that remark.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The wording used by the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) is unacceptable to me, and I am sure that he will rephrase his remark.

Mr. Foulkes: Someone who gets elected as a Labour Member of Parliament, who then leaves the Labour party and refuses to allow a by-election is here under false pretences, and "traitor" seems to be a perfect description. Because of my respect for you, Madam Deputy Speaker, I shall certainly withdraw that remark, but I know you understand what I mean.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am much obliged to the hon. Gentleman. Can we now proceed in good order?

Mr. Douglas: That from the party of idealism.

Mr. Portillo: When the hon. Member for Brightside speaks, I hope that he will tell us about the Labour party's proposal for the roof tax. Will he explain how it will be related to ability to pay? What is the Labour party's way out of the obvious pitfalls such as the burden that will fall on pensioner widows, the effect of home improvements or the simple fact that the value of a person's home is a wholly unreliable indicator of the owner's means?

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): In Scotland in the non-domestic sector, the Government have drawn up a scheme to give some relief on revaluation. However, when it comes to improving property in the non-domestic sector, whoever owns the business will have to pay the full amount of the new rate imposed as a result of those improvements. What is the difference? I do not understand why the Minister has made a difference between the new rates in the non-domestic sector and the old rating system in the domestic sector.

Mr. Douglas *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should resume his seat and let us proceed with this debate in an orderly fashion.

Mr. Douglas: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I want to be perfectly fair——

Mr. Foulkes: It will be for the first time.

Mr. Douglas: On the Government Benches, it is well known and clearly defined as to who speaks from the Front Bench.

Mr. Foulkes: They are the Government and they are paying, idiot.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I think that Mr. Speaker dealt with all that earlier. We should be able to continue the debate now. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) is being disruptive, and unnecessarily so.

Mr. Douglas: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is well and clearly defined: we have institutionalised opposition. What I ask you to do—perhaps after further consultation with Mr. Speaker—is to get as clearly defined as it is for the Government who may speak from the Opposition Front Bench. Already we have had, from the Back Benches, interventions from an expert on foreign affairs, a Scottish Opposition Front-Bench spokesman. May the matter be cleared up for the benefit of those of us who are eternal Back Benchers?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I understand that Mr. Speaker dealt with the matter earlier today.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), having withdrawn the word "traitor", then to refer to his former colleague as an idiot?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I did not hear that. I think that we ought not to behave like fifth formers. We should get on with a serious debate.

Mr. Portillo: I do not want to delay the House much longer. If the hon. Member for Brightside cannot deal

[Mr. Portillo]

today with the matter that I have put to him, it may appear in the policy document which the Labour party is to produce later this week. Unfortunately, the rumours suggest that it will not be in the policy document. If it is not, we shall consider ourselves swindled out of an explanation to which we feel entitled.

In reply to the point made by the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), the great unfairness about a roof tax is that a person whose means do not change at all could find that the value of his or her property suddenly rises because the area around it goes up in value; perhaps it becomes yuppified. That is a wholly different position from a business seeking to invest in its own premises and improving the premises thereby.

The fifth option for local government finance is the local income tax put forward by the SLD. I congratulate the party on putting it forward consistently but not on the proposal itself. I do not know how the hon. Member for Truro can explain the fairness of a system which would allow one third of the adult population to make no contribution at all. The burden of the contribution that millions of people would otherwise make would have to fall on the unlucky two thirds.

Not only has the SLD come up with a policy; it has also come up with figures. Unfortunately, those figures are badly flawed. They have to be flawed in order to support the fantasy contention that most people would be better off under a local income tax than under the community charge. Anyone who looks carefully at the SLD figures will see the basic flaw. The amounts of money that the SLD seeks to raise are a year out of date. They are based on the 1989-90 figures. Since then, local authorities have chosen to increase their spending by £4·5 billion; therefore, the figures considerably underestimate what would need to be raised.

The SLD's figures have been set to raise just £7·2 billion in England, whereas councils in England this year are raising £10·4 billion from community charge payers, after allowing for the contribution from central Government via benefit and transitional relief.

As it happens, we have set out the correct figures in an answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack). They show that a person in Yeovil on average male earnings would pay a local income tax bill of £955 compared with a community charge of £363; that is over two and a half times as much. Even a single person on £5,000 of taxable income, which I think most of us would agree is not excessive, would pay more in local income tax than in community charge in Yeovil.

In Truro, the story is similar. A person on national average male earnings would pay £888, which is two and three quarter times the current community charge. A person on £5,000 of taxable income—say, a farm worker—would still have to pay more if his own Member of Parliament got his way. It is at the level of average earnings and above that the local income tax really begins to do its damage. The author of the original SLD proposals admitted that couples with a joint income of £12,000 or above would be worse off under local income tax than with the community charge.

I do not want to detain the House too long on a local income tax, but I should like to address one point raised by the hon. Member—namely the cost of administration. He used a figure of £750 million for the community charge. I do not recognise that figure. The correct amount is nearer £400 million; £750 million would be right for collecting a local income tax. The Inland Revenue has estimated that it would take 55,000 more staff to administer it. As my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde said very accurately, the great problem with a local income tax, like a roof tax, is that it would do nothing to increase local authority accountability, the absolutely vital point which we have addressed in bringing in the community charge.

In considering what improvements we can make to the community charge, we will not dilute its effect on local accountability. To do so would not be an improvement. It would be bad for the national economy, for local government and, above all, for the people who had to pay the bill. None of the alternatives that I have mentioned—not rates, not a roof tax, not a local income tax—can match the community charge in fairness, simplicity or accountability. I urge the House to reject the motion and to support the Government amendment.

5.5 pm

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): I repeat my welcome to the Minister on inheriting a bed of nails. All his predecessors have been promoted, one of them out of what we might describe as mad cow disease into mad cow disease in terms of what he has inherited. I apologise to the House because I shall have to leave shortly and return later in the debate.

There is no doubt that the issue of the next two months will be the alternative to the poll tax, whether it is the version that the SLD has chosen to adopt and to which it is sticking through thick and thin—mostly thick—or the adaptation that the Government are seeking to introduce while maintaining the principle that they claim is the fundamental basis of the poll tax.

I should like to take up the question of what the principle is. The Government amendment suggests, as the Minister did, that the real principle is that most people should contribute something to local services. But we all know that that is not the basis of the poll tax. Its basic principle, to which we object, is that we have a flat-rate tax that does not take account of ability to pay above rebate levels. A large and growing number of the Government's Back-Benchers also object to that principle. That is why only a fair and progressive alternative could meet the myriad of anomalies that present themselves as the Government attempt to dig themselves out of the hole which all Opposition Members—Labour, SLD and others—spelled out as the poll tax went through its parliamentary stages.

Whatever the Government do in the next two months, they will make administrative matters worse and they will cause even greater confusion. Let us take the statements over the weekend about the sudden resurgence of a commitment to the family and to the community. Let us assume that the Government introduce an exemption for non-working wives and mothers looking after children. All Opposition Members would welcome that. It would be a progressive and sensible step that the Government should not tax people who do not have income. It is such a common sense step that it is blindingly obvious to anyone who is the least caring about what the Government are doing. It would be right because it would encourage parents to stop at home to look after their children, rather

than having nannies or sending the children to private schools—something, of course, of which Tory Members know nothing. Having established that there is a sudden resurgence of commitment, with parents looking after their children at home, which we welcome, we have to ask —who pays for it?

Under a progressive tax that takes into account the ability to pay, takes more from the better off, exempts those with no income and relieves those with little income, it is fair to exempt people who stay at home. However, would it be fair to retain a flat rate tax that took exactly the same from everyone above rebate levels? That would mean that a person on two thirds of average income would be treated the same as the person with five times the average income. It would mean that a wife looking after the children of a very rich man with £100,000 a year coming in would be exempt, whereas the woman living next door, who looked after her children at home, went out to work part time and earned wages that took her—or jointly her and her partner—above the rebate level, would not be exempt. It would mean that the person who got up early in the morning, went out cleaning to keep the bread on the table and make ends meet and ensured that the family were not entitled to benefit but stood on their own two feet, would be penalised by the poll tax, whereas the rich woman in a detached house nearby would be exempt. What nonsense there would be under a flat rate charge.

The same anomalies arise in the cry—which is understandable from those who know nothing about holiday cottages and second homes—that those who have second houses should also be exempt. They say that the standard poll tax, which is really a property tax, should be lifted from the shoulders of those struggling to maintain two homes.

All Opposition Members—including, I presume, those in the minority parties—accept that there is a good case for alleviating the second charge of standard poll tax where people are obliged by their job to be in residence as part of their employment contract. We accept that where people are attempting to sell their homes, their tax should be alleviated. There are anomalies. However, we can never accept that those who can afford weekend cottages should have their dustbins emptied, roads maintained, streets lit and communities protected for them at the weekend, or the occasions when they visit their homes, at the expense at the rest of the community. It would not be right if everyone else paid more so that they paid less.

Mr. Peter Fry (Wellingborough): Will the hon. Gentleman give the House an estimate of the percentage of the average community charge that goes on the services he has just mentioned? Does he agree that the vast proportion of community charge goes on education and social services, which are paid for the area in which a person lives? Therefore, someone with a second home would be paying a much bigger contribution for services that he will not use.

Mr. Blunkett: Even with the Government making a 50 per cent. contribution for protection services such as the police, the fire and road maintenance services which notch up a large percentage of the revenue spent by local government—[HON. MEMBERS: "What about education?"] Conservative Members shout, "What about education?" but this is supposed to be some sort of charge for services received. That is what the Government have said in the past three years. Most of us accept that education should be met through a tax.

We accept that the quality, availability and provision of education and training for the children of our neighbour and our community is as important to our well-being, as well as of moral importance, as it is to the children that we bring up ourselves. Therefore, it is not a charge for services received for ourselves and our family, but an obligation, a responsibility, for the whole of society. That is why we believe in tax, not this notional charge.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: I feel particularly strongly about second homes, given my constituency. I found the remarks of the hon. Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) extraordinary. There are many villages in my part of the country where 50 per cent. of the homes sold are second homes. It is bad enough for local people to lose the opportunity to be housed locally, without losing the money for the local school, bus service and the rest, which is, effectively, what he suggested.

Mr. Blunkett: That is a helpful intervention because it reminds me that £5 million of this year's income of the well-known London borough of Westminster came from the standard poll tax. That says a great deal about the flats of business people in Westminster, and about what the relatively poor would have to pick up if the standard poll tax were abolished. Therefore, it is an interesting point —[HON. MEMBERS: "What is the Labour party going to do?"] Conservative Members shout, "What is the Labour party going to do?" We made it clear that we believe that it is necessary to have a tax that takes into account the property that people occupy and therefore, as I have already spelt out, the service that they receive when occupying that property.

There is a range of potential anomalies which the Government, if they stagger into them, will regret at leisure. It is helpful for us to be able to read the articles printed in right-wing newspapers like the *Sunday Express* that spell out the sort of shambles that we are in for in the months ahead if the advice given by Conservative Back-Benchers is taken.

That raises the issue of the meaningful alternative to the poll tax that replaces unfairness with equality and justice, and ensures that the anomalies that we can all see round us are swept away once and for all. The alternative cannot be a local income tax, which the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) attempted to persuade us was a good idea. That is not because such a tax is not progressive or does not have attractions. It is partly because it does not take into account the provision of services to property, even if only partly occupied. It is partly for the very reasons that the hon. Gentleman's speech illustrated. If this debate could only be seen on television tonight, I think the issue about having a single, local income tax as a replacement for the poll tax would go by the board for ever. The idea of having a percentage flat rate, adjusted at the end of the year so that people received a penalty while facing an increase in their tax—as a buoyant tax, a percentage would automatically increase their liability—would be a killer for people. It would penalise those who fell just inside the tax threshold.

If Conservative Members are trying to peddle the idea that the cut that most people pay is a key principle, they will not find us unreceptive. We accept that it is important

[Mr. Blunkett]

that people who have an income that entitles them to pay tax, or which can be shown to be of a sufficient level to enhance their earnings to a point where they should pay tax, should pay. Only those who have no income or a low income should have an amelioration in their tax.

Mr. Douglas: Will the hon. Gentleman clarify the position? If I understand correctly, the Labour party is in favour of a property tax plus an additional element that takes into account ability to pay. How long would it take to bring that into operation, given Layfield's estimate of five years?

Mr. Blunkett The Layfield committee, operating in 1976, did not have a great deal to say about the technology 14 years—by the time we are able to implement our taxes, more like 17 or 18 years—later. Clearly it will take time to change the position that we inherit.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) has spelt out clearly the timetable that we would adopt after taking office. I give the pledge that the introduction of our alternative tax will not only be more speedily implemented than the poll tax has been, as it has been foisted on the people of Britain, but we shall ensure that the anomalies that we are now debating week after week, in the press as well as in the House—which all Conservative Members know exist—will not be present. We shall consult about it first, listen to what people are saying, iron out those anomalies and ensure that, whatever happens, people's poll tax burden will be alleviated as quickly as is humanly possible. We shall welcome the aid of all hon. Members in the speedy introduction of an alternative tax.

All Conservative Members who want banding; all who want to maintain safety nets, as they will when they discover what will happen to their seats if they do not; all who believe in fairness: and all who have an inkling that if they do not change their minds the electorate will help them to do so will be reminded by the next Labour Government that we want their assistance in getting rid of one of the most unfair and unprincipled inventions that has ever been inflicted on the British people.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the hon. Gentleman confirm or deny that the Labour party did not adopt a local income tax not because of its inherent defects, not because there is not a huge body of support for it, but because the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) and the Labour party's environment team received an instruction from the Leader of the Opposition that a local income tax had to be excluded from their alternatives because it had already been proposed by another party?

Mr. Blunkett: It is difficult to take seriously a question which presumes that the Labour party operates in the same way as the Social and Liberal Democratic party where, when an instruction comes down from above, everyone jumps to adhere to it. No one could ever accuse the Labour party of not engaging in full and open debate on its policies. We are notorious for that. We have lost the past three elections in our endeavour to engage in open and democratic debate. We shall certainly not engage in it again. We have every intention of uniting behind a fair and just alternative which does not have the disadvantages of the poll tax, the anomalies of a single income tax or the inanity of those hon. Members who leave the party and think that it is great fun to have a few jokes about who should be sitting on the Front or the Back Benches.

Those who pose the question "What about the non-payment of tax?" must address themselves to their own friends and supporters. How can Conservative Members have the audacity, in the media or through their summer offensive today, to accuse a handful of Labour Members of breaching the law by not paying their poll tax when the National Audit Office has just issued a report showing that the Government are allowing £5 billion—not million—of tax to remain uncollected and encouraging such evasion by cutting the inspectorate which should be preventing that? They should put their money where their mouth is and increase the inspectorate so that that uncollected income tax can be chased up.

Mr. Harry Greenway: The hon. Gentleman makes an extraordinary point. Is he aware that the Labour-controlled Ealing council, so summarily dismissed by the electors a few days ago, has not had a single year's accounts passed by the district auditor since it was elected in 1986?

Mr. Blunkett: I imagine that it is taking steps to ensure that it collects all its income, which is more than can be said of the Inland Revenue. The hon. Gentleman may be euphoric about the result in Ealing, and I make no bones about it being a bad one for the Labour party, but he should bear it in mind that the Labour party polled more votes than the Conservative party in Ealing on 3 May.

Mr. Greenway: That is not true.

Mr. Blunkett: Yes, it is.

The Conservative party, which preaches about being a low-tax party but does not collect tax and national insurance, causing the rest of us to pay more, has this year increased the amount of tax which we pay as a nation from 33·8 per cent. to an estimated 37·6 per cent. of gross domestic product. The Government have the cheek of the devil to proclaim themselves the tax reliever of the poor and the benefactor of those who are badly off. The Conservative party has taxed the poor more, hit middle-income earners harder, assisted the rich and ensured, through the poll tax, that there has been a transfer of income from the poor to the wealthy; from those who can least afford to pay to those who can afford to pay more. That is the scandal of the Conservative party's tax policy. That is why we are not only against it but will replace it with something which will receive universal support for its fairness and equity.

5.25 pm

Mr. Peter Fry (Wellingborough): The hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) sought, rather oddly and illogically, to justify a campaign of breaking the law by complaining that in another area the law was not being carried out effectively. Despite the Leader of the Opposition's statement dissociating the Labour party from the anti-poll tax campaign, it is evident to anyone who knows the leading members of the anti-poll tax campaign in his locality where their political allegiance lies. They are composed of Labour party supporters and are even headed by at least one hon. Member. It is high

time that those Labour Members who feel so strongly at least resigned their seats and offered themselves for re-election on that basis.

However, I do not want to spend too much time talking about the Labour party, for the simple reason that we have considered what it intends to do for a length of time which can be compared with the gestation period of an elephant, except that it has not even produced a mouse. Therefore, we are talking about a void.

It is much more important this afternoon to debate the policies of the Social and Liberal Democrats. It is interesting that once again the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) and his party have got their figures wrong. Their figures and estimates are based on last year's expenditure. That is hardly surprising, because the Social and Liberal Democrats spend all their time dealing with the world as they would like it to be, rather than as it is, which is the Government's province.

The crucial point, which has not been made often enough, is that it is completely wrong to equate the level of the rates last year with what the level of the rates would have been this year if there had not been a change. Wellingborough district council has a modest community charge of £288, but even its spending showed an increase. A comparison of its rates last year with what its rates would have been this year shows a 22 per cent. increase. Northamptonshire is not a tremendously high spender, but throughout the county the rates would have been about 30 per cent. higher. If many of those who write to hon. Members realised that their rates would have been 30 per cent. higher, they would not have been so critical of the community charge.

But that is not the only point that I want to make about the proposal. It is interesting that it is assumed that a local income tax will give the accountability that is claimed for it. It is true that some European countries have a local income tax. I was fascinated to hear an interview with a Danish person. He was asked, "How do you pay for your local government services?" The answer was, "By means of a local income tax." The next question was, "How much is your local income tax?" The answer amounted to the Danish equivalent of 28p in the pound.

If local authorities were to be given the right to impose a local income tax, costs would escalate before we knew where we were. If the argument is then advanced that central Government must cough up the money in the form of grant in order to ensure that the local income tax is not too high, local accountability would become very difficult to enforce.

Rates were a most unsatisfactory form of local government taxation. I entered politics because I could see no justification for the rating system. Can those Opposition Members who say that the community charge is unfair tell me why it was fairer for one person living alone in a house to pay the same in rates as four or five people earning money in the house next door? The rating system was totally discredited.

Sir Cyril Smith (Rochdale): Then why did it take the Government 10 or 11 years to do something about it?

Mr. Fry: A sinner who repents is better than one who never repents.

Neither the official Opposition nor the other Opposition parties have said anything this afternoon that makes me believe that the system that the Government have introduced is wrong. However, as with all great innovations, there are defects in the Government's proposals. I, and most of my hon. Friends, accept that there are defects. Therefore, we welcome the amendment tabled by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and others, which demonstrates that the Government are prepared to listen to sensible proposals. The main point of the debate is to air a number of alternatives. I give the hon. Member for Truro credit for listing some of them. Some of the other contributions have been less helpful.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): The hon. Gentleman has reminded the House that the Prime Minister is prepared to listen. Does he have any suggestions to make to her about amending the poll tax so as to benefit his constituents and people throughout the country?

Mr. Fry: I was about to do just that. I trust that the hon. Gentleman will listen to what I am about to say.

Mention has already been made of the fact that the sudden imposition of the full community charge on married women with no income of their own can have a drastic effect on the family's finances. I am aware of the fact that transitional relief and other benefits are available, but many people live in what was comparatively low-rated property. Therefore, when the community charge was introduced, they found that the bill increased sharply and that they could not obtain transitional relief.

All people should, in principle, contribute towards the cost of local government services, but the Minister ought to consider whether married women with no income should pay the full community charge. The cost of complete exemption would be exorbitant, but the community charge bears heavily upon the mothers of small children who have no income of their own. All hon. Members would welcome anything that the Minister could do to help them.

Mr. Allen McKay: I sympathise with the hon. Gentleman's point, but who will pay the bill in those areas where three quarters of married women do not work?

Mr. Fry: Under the rating system, the husband paid for his wife and himself. We are talking about an additional amount of transitional relief for married women who do not go out to work. I said that I did not believe that full exemption could be afforded, but some exemption could, and it ought not to fall on the other community charge payers. The money would have to come from central Government.

The hon. Member for Brightside did not fully appreciate the extent to which the community charge is bearing heavily on people of comparatively modest means who have second homes. He suggested, as did the hon. Member for Truro, that everyone who owns a second home is exceedingly wealthy.

Mr. Chris Butler (Warrington, South): A constituent came to see me in my surgery at the weekend and told me that he had bought a chalet in Wales which has no electricity, gas or water. He is disabled and earns £79 a week. The rates on the chalet were £140; he is now being asked to pay two standard community charges. The system does not enable him to qualify for transitional relief. He is in receipt of no community charge rebate. Ought not that anomaly to be corrected?

Mr. Fry: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I had intended to refer to a similar case in my constituency. People who have worked hard all their lives and whose incomes are modest may choose not to have Mediterranean holidays but to invest their money instead in seaside chalets. They feel that they are being penalised.

Mr. Home Robertson: All those hon. Members with Scottish constituencies who had the poll tax and all the other anomalies inflicted on them a year ago, just because of votes cast for the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends, find it quaint to hear them squealing about all these problems. The hon. Gentleman has referred to a number of poll tax concessions. Would he go a step further and say that such concessions should be made retrospective by the addition of a further year for Scotland?

Mr. Fry: The hon. Gentleman must make his own speech in his own way, should he be given that opportunity. If he will allow me, I shall get on with mine.

Sir Cyril Smith: I strongly support what the hon. Gentleman says. I have had more trouble with second homes in my constituency than I have had about the rest of the poll tax put together. I have written to the Prime Minister and the Minister giving details of specific cases and requesting that they should be part of the review. The council in my constituency has decided to charge twice the rate of poll tax on second homes—about £800. I am delighted that the Government have rate-capped Rochdale. The council has indulged in gross extravagance.

A constituent of mine, a woman of 91, went to live with her daughter four years ago. She said, "I'm only coming so long as I can keep my home." The daughter kept her mother's home for four years rather than upset the old dear. Suddenly the daughter was faced with having to pay 800 quid, although she is caring for her mother and keeping her home going.

A fortnight ago, a full-time officer in the Royal Air Force told me that he had bought a second home in Rochdale ready for when he comes out of the RAF and he has suddenly been faced with an 800-quid poll tax. I strongly support the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Fry: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): My hon. Friend is as interested as I in the remarks of the hon. Member for Rochdale (Sir C. Smith). I put it to him that a number of my constituents are also suffering because they own second homes. They are not beautiful holiday homes; they are second homes for work, or other reasons. My constituents have to pay two community charges. May I suggest that the hon. Member for Rochdale has a word with his colleagues, the Liberal councillors of Chelmsford borough council who have imposed two community charges on second homes?

Mr. Fry: This is rapidly becoming a debate on interventions rather than on the motion before the House.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Fry: No. If we go on like this, my hon. Friend may know where she is, but I shall not.

One of the greatest problems is that many councils which never previously rated empty properties too readily accepted the formula of imposing two standard charges, so people who were paying nothing suddenly had to pay two standard charges. I know that allowances are supposed to be made for the first three months and that then charges on a rising scale from nothing up to two standard charges could be imposed. However, certain categories of people have been badly caught when councils have imposed the full charge.

One such category comprises young people who have bought old properties because they could not afford a new property or one in a good state of repair. A young man and woman who want to get married in a year's time and have bought an old property now discover that they are being charged a standard charge where they live and a double charge on the empty property which they are repairing and renovating. Instead of having to pay one charge each, they are having to pay four charges between them.

I assume that it was never intended that people who are trying to help themselves and who could not afford to buy a house in good repair should be penalised. The present safeguard of three months is totally inadequate; even a year would probably be inadequate. Local authorities need to apply much greater discretion in taking such cases into account.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I wish to draw attention to two particular cases. First, somebody who loses an elderly parent may subsequently receive an immediate community charge bill. There is no three months' leeway. Secondly, empty farm cottages are relieved of community charge in Scotland but not in England. However, the cases involving deceased parents are really quite tragic.

Mr. Fry: The three-month period started at the beginning of the year, so it was over before the community charge came into force.

I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister has the ability to put right the anomalies that have been raised. The injustice that has been outlined by hon. Members on both sides of the House causes deep resentment. People on modest incomes who can pay their own community charge strongly resent being asked to pay more.

I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will be delighted to know that I do not propose to read out a list of suggestions for him to follow.

Sir David Mitchell (Hampshire North-West): Is my hon. Friend aware that there is another anomaly, involving farm workers? Those who suffered a large increase in their community charge compared with the rates that they paid will be eligible for concessions, but that applies only to those who previously paid rates. Farm workers in tied cottages did not pay rates, so they are not eligible for the concession. I hope that my hon. Friend will realise that that is another anomaly which should be drawn to the attention of my hon. Friend the Minister.

Mr. Fry: I am coming to the end of my remarks and from now on hon. Members will have to interrupt someone else. I have suggested two main concerns and no doubt hon. Members will make other suggestions. However, in all seriousness, I stress that the two anomalies that I have mentioned this afternoon will make a great difference to the ultimate acceptance of the community charge. The electorate are fully aware that the Government intend to do something, but what they do will decide how that electorate will react.

I am aware that there is not untold money to throw at the problem, and I am not suggesting it, but when my hon. Friend completes his deliberations and produces a number of sensible proposals that do away with the worst anomalies, he will receive not only the gratitude of Conservative Members and perhaps some Opposition Members, but the thanks of the electorate.

Finally, even when the worst anomalies have been removed, I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister is fully aware that that will not be the end of the story. The major problem is that the charge is too high. Whether the community charge is £288, as in my constituency, or £350 or £400 as in other parts of Northamptonshire, anyone who has to pay more than they paid in rates will regard it as excessive. Will my hon. Friend re-examine the way in which central Government grants are distributed? For example, in Northamptonshire we have many of the costs that arise in the south-east of England, but those extra costs were not recognised in the grant that the council received. I hope that my hon. Friend will consider that factor, as it could make a considerable difference in future.

Local authorities must examine their budgets. We are often told that no savings can be made and that there can be no more cuts. After the introduction of local management of schools, are the Government determined to ensure that local education authorities cut their central administration? Certainly real savings could be made and passed on to the community charge payers. We should ensure that county councils initiate thorough cost investigation exercises, because ultimately county councils are the deciding factor.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is not here, as he had so much to say about Derbyshire. One of the most interesting local election results was not Westminster but Derby. Derby was marginally held by the Conservative party and everyone thought that it would be lost, but it was not, because anyone who has been to Derbyshire recently knows that Derbyshire county council is clearly marked out as a mighty overspending authority. When the electorate can clearly identify the overspenders, people will vote accordingly. In my view, that justifies the Government's policy.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fry: No.

Before I sit down, I must tell my hon. Friend the Minister that he has a mighty task ahead of him. I welcome him to his new position, knowing how well he did in his previous post in the Department of Transport, and I wish him well, but the hopes of many Conservative Members and the hopes of our party rest heavily upon his shoulders.

5.48 pm

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): I welcome the Minister to his new post. Let me say with some diffidence that when he was elected to the House he was one of the younger Conservative Members that I marked out for stardom. I do not want to condemn him by saying that. I recognise that he has enormous ability, but he has an enormous task because he has to attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable.

The criteria that the Government adopted for the poll tax were accountability, fairness and efficiency. However, the more one tries to achieve fairness, the more one moves away from accountability. Therefore, I do not apologise for referring particularly to the Scottish experience.

It is probably difficult to carry out a policy of a local income tax for the whole of Britain. I recognise the administrative difficulties, as did Layfield a long time ago. However, in Scotland, it is perfectly possible to have a local income tax. If the proposals accepted by the Opposition parties for a Scottish Parliament are carried out, it is eminently desirable that that Parliament is elected on proportional representation, and that it carries out discussions on how we reform local government in Scotland and how we apportion taxation, on both a Scottish and a local authority basis. If we cannot do that for 5 million people in Scotland, we had better give up advising people on how to govern themselves. The basic difficulty for the Opposition parties is how we should move towards that position. The Labour party especially has got itself on the horns of a dilemma.

The Government talk about accountability and say that everyone has to pay. If one accepts that, extreme problems are encountered, as in Scotland. What does one do about the mentally handicapped? One has to make concessions. We were told repeatedly that concessions could not be made for those with Alzheimer's disease, yet concessions were made. There is an enormous anomaly in relation to care of the aged. The hon. Member for Rochdale (Sir C. Smith) gave an illustration of it. He spoke about a lady who had left her home temporarily to be cosseted in the bosom of her family. The family had to pay their own poll tax and twice the standard charge for the home that the old lady had vacated, although they were looking after an aged parent. I have many experiences of such cases in my own family. If our elderly parents had been put into nursing homes, they would not have paid the poll tax, yet they would have made a greater charge on local government services. Those are considerable anomalies, but they relate to fairness.

It is a farce that we loosely speak of "local government finance". There is no such thing, as the Minister reveals in his speeches. If local government finance means anything, why does the poll tax account for 25 per cent. to 30 per cent. of local revenue in England and Wales, whereas in Scotland it accounts for 15 per cent? The reason is that the Exchequer transfers resources in one form or another from central Government revenue to local government on a basis that is not, and cannot be, equitable. In Scotland, the poll tax accounts for 17 to 18 per cent. of local revenue in some authorities, whereas in others it accounts for as little as 4 per cent.

Some have referred to accountability in electoral terms. I defy any Scottish Member—and I must be careful as there are four here at present—[HON. MEMBERS: "There are five."] Yes, there are five if I include myself. I defy any Scottish Member to go out into the street in his authority and to ask 100 electors which authority—district or regional—is responsible for the various services. They would not know.

I stood in a local election. I now have stabs in the front from the Labour party instead of stabs in the back. For me, the issues in the local election were the poll tax and fighting the Tories. The issue for the Labour party was fighting Dick Douglas. I have been called a traitor in this House. I was called far worse by so-called Labour supporters in the election campaign. However, as my old mother used to say in Govan, "Sticks and stones will break

[Mr. Dick Douglas]

your bones, but names will never hurt you." If that is all that will happen to me here and elsewhere, it will not worry me too much.

There is a problem of distinguishing between the services and between the responsibility of local authorities for those services. In a system where 75 to 90 per cent. of revenue is redistributed by central Government, it becomes a farce to talk about local government finance. In Scotland, it is eminently suitable and desirable that we move towards a system of local income tax. There is no gainsaying that. We have had the poll tax for 14 months. All the Conservative Members, such as the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee), who pronounce for Scotland on the poll tax, who now cavil about having to pay it because it has hit their constituencies and who walked through the Government Lobby should now recognise that, if we call ourselves a United Kingdom Parliament, we must have regard to national circumstances—and Scotland is a nation. As was illustrated yesterday over Ravenscraig, this House and the Tory Government are putting great strains on the Union, and nothing is putting greater strains on the Union than the issue of the poll tax and local government finance.

I want to deal with the Labour party's so-called alternative. The hon. Gentlemen who were calling me names are absent now. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), that great whiz kid—and I have called him a dunderhead, which is a term of endearment —and others propose that we should have a roof tax. A roof tax is just the rates in another guise. We have had some answers from the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett), but they were guarded and cryptic non-answers. It would take by any estimate three to five years to introduce such a tax. What will happen to this great party, the guardian of the Scottish people?

A few months ago, we all signed the "Claim of Right" and said that we believed in the sovereignty of the Scottish people—a valuable and historic concept. If one believes in that, the votes of the Scottish people count not only in British terms but in Scottish terms. The overwhelming majority of the Scottish people, in regional and general elections, voted against the poll tax, yet it was still imposed on us.

Labour Members have been careful to say that they will repeal the poll tax, but that may take three to five years if and when there is a Labour Government. What happens in the interim? Will the poll tax roll on? I predict that the vast majority of the Scottish people will cease to pay the poll tax the Monday after a Labour Government are elected. What does one do then? What are the contingency plans of the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock) and the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith)? They have a dilemma. Having marched us up to the top of the hill and having said how much they disliked the poll tax, they are being very careful.

I am called a traitor by the Labour party because I say that I will stand beside those who cannot pay. I am proud to be a traitor on that ground. When the leader of the Labour party came to Scotland in January 1988, he said, "Pay up." He said that for good reasons from his electoral point of view, but he was neglecting the history of the Labour party in defending the poorer sections of the population. We must have cognisance of that. The great party of idealism now says, "You can have a conscience clause and you can refuse to pay, but, for goodness sake, do not tell anyone you are doing it. Keep it secret. If you appear on a platform with other supporters and say that you are not paying, that is a terrible crime." That is a great position for the party of idealism to adopt, is it not?

There is no way that we can reform the poll tax. We can ameliorate it and, in all humility, I shall suggest some ways in which we might do that which have occurred to me since I was elected honorary president of the students' union at Stirling university. Students are especially severely handicapped by the tax. If we start pursuing students for non-payment of the poll tax, we will lose more money than we collect. The Government should realise that. I am not necessarily pleading; I am fulfilling a responsibility by suggesting that the Government might consider excluding all students, and certainly all those under 21.

There is a good democratic reason for that suggestion. My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) has taken time to analyse these matters and has discovered that young people do not want their names to appear on the electoral register because they see a correlation, which the Government do not see, between registering for electoral purposes and registering for poll tax purposes. That is a persuasive argument for saying that——

Mr. Harry Barnes: My hon. Friend argued that the tax could not be reformed. The reason for that is that there is a relationship between the electoral register and the poll tax register. Current figures show that at least 600,000 people over the age of 18 are missing from the electoral register. The average is 1,000 per constituency, although the distribution is uneven. Nearly 10 per cent. of those eligible are missing in Finchley, the Prime Minister's constituency. Whatever banding arrangements we introduce, we shall not alter that. The tax bills are directed to individuals in their homes and that links the poll tax and electoral registers.

Mr. Douglas: I accept what my hon. Friend says. That is why I plead for a local income tax in Scotland and why I have made my feelings clear. But I am being cautious and my concern at present has to do with the interim period and what the Government might do. I realise that certain sections of the population are severely imperilled by the poll tax, and students are certainly among them. Theirs is a pressing need for which the Government could cater more quickly and easily than they could cater for non-working spouses.

The Minister has an enormous task ahead of him. The Government have a self-inflicted wound which he must heal. No one asked the Government to introduce the poll tax. What makes the poll tax such a farce is that it does not result in the collection of more revenue. No one forced it on the Government; they panicked about Scotland. I suggest that the Minister is wrong in thinking that opinion about the tax is settling down in Scotland. It is not. It is difficult to get hold of the figures because local authorities are not clear about them, but it appears that we may have between half a million Scots who have not paid and who have been in default for a whole year and 1 million who have not paid part of the tax. Personally, I have not paid for 14 months. I do not know what will happen to

non-payers—it may be the arrestment of wages, the poinding of furniture or warrant sales—but the Scots are resisting, and will continue to resist the poll tax.

In the end, Labour-controlled local authorities will have to decide between poinding and warrant sales to enforce the legislation. What will Labour councillors do then? Should they echo the words of the Labour leader and say that the non-payers are terrible and are embarrassing local authority workers, or should they stand up and be counted? I do not know which way it will go, but I can assure the Minister that resistance in Scotland will not disappear. If hon. Members such as the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) call me a traitor for continuing to stand my ground, I will take the epithet from them. I know that the view by which I stand is the view that will have support in the long run. I suppose it will be said that, in the long run, we are all dead, but in the long run the people of Scotland will certainly respect those who stand by their view on this issue of principle.

6.5 pm

Mr. Donald Thompson (Calder Valley): I did not intend to follow the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) down the ways and glens of Scotland, but I agree with him on one point. The Government should have introduced the community charge in England and Wales at the same time as it was introduced in Scotland—at least a year ago and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) suggested, perhaps even four or five years ago. We were in error in not introducing the tax earlier across Great Britain. With his wise and disparate views, the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West seems to have spent his time in the wrong party. Had he been a Conservative Member he could have held those views and no one would have noticed; he would not have ended up being called a traitor at all.

I join hon. Members in welcoming my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities to his new post. He and I have been friends for a long time and hope to remain so for a long time.

In introducing the debate, the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) said that the Liberal Democrats had tabled the motion so that the Government would not spring anything on the House—unlike the Liberal Democrats, who sprung the motion on us. Twenty-four hours ago, the motion was not even written; they had no idea what they wanted to say. They crept into the Table Office at dead of night and tabled the motion because if they had tabled it earlier I should have been able to report its contents to people in my area and we should have been able to win more than the two seats that we won from the Liberal Democrats in the local elections.

The hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) asks for aid with future policies. Had the Government had help from Labour Members and local government representatives at all levels during the past three years—the gestation period for the community charge—we should have had a stronger and better community charge now. Instead, they have ruthlessly taken every opportunity to terrorise those sections of the community about whom they bleat the most—the old, the sick, the disabled and the young.

Mr. O'Brien: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Thompson: No, I shall not give way.

Labour Members have gone about their constituencies exaggerating the effect of the charge and minimising the effect of rebate. The amendment to the motion states that "10 million people have received bills reduced by rebate whilst 7·5 million have been protected by transitional relief". In my constituency there have been bitter rows about rates ever since I began serving in local government. Since 1967, the issue on every doorstep at every election has been the rating system and its unfairness. The same applied to elections for the county councils—God bless their absence; we ought to get rid of them if we possibly can as, like Caesar, they are remembered only by their misdeeds—and to local elections. We have heard nothing from the Opposition about what they would put in place of the rates.

Mr. O'Brien: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Thompson: I am not giving way.

Having said that, I express my genuine thanks to the officers in Calderdale—Malcolm Fearnley and his team—for their efficient implementation of the community charge in my constituency. They have managed to deal with 32,000 applications for rebates and 40,500 applications for transitional relief. They have done that efficiently and speedily and they have also dealt with extra help. [HON. MEMBERS: "They are poll tax capped."] It is not a poll tax—it is a community charge, and it provides the biggest cushion to help the old and the disabled that we have ever had.

Mr. O'Brien: What about capping?

Mr. Thompson: I will consider capping in a moment. In a poll run by the local paper, people in my area voted 3:1 in favour of it.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: My hon. Friend said that his local council had processed 32,000 rebates and some 40,000 transitional reliefs. How many staff were required to process that work? My local council is asking for extra staff because it claims that it is behind with claims. I should like to be able to tell my local council that it ought to have been able to cope without extra staff. How many staff were needed in my hon. Friend's constituency?

Mr. Thompson: Quite honestly, I cannot answer that and I do not wish to give a dishonest answer. Whether or not extra staff were recruited, the council had the foresight to act as it did rather than sulking, and the chief officer told me today that the money is rolling in.

I want to translate what my hon. Friend the Minister of State has said about the vast amounts that we are spending in local government support into what happens in a local government area. My figures are taken from the minutes of a meeting of the metropolitan borough of Calderdale in March 1990. For the year 1990-91 in my area the total expenditure per person on the Labour budget would be about £1,020. On the Conservative budget it would be £969 per person. The revenue support grant from general taxation is £277 per head—not an inconsiderable sum. The unified business rate from the business community is £293 per head. That gives a real community charge under the Labour figures of £450 per head and under the Conservatives of £398. However, the Government in their wisdom have left a safety net of £137 less a low rateable value grant of £25. That reduces the real community charge to £296 under Labour and £245 under the Conservatives.

[Mr. Thompson]

The hon. Member for Normanton asked me about capping. The £245 is the figure that the Government expect under a capped system.

Mr. O'Brien: I raised a couple of anomalies with the hon. Member for Calder Valley (Mr. Thompson) in a discussion on Radio Leeds a few weeks ago and he said that they would be amended. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will recall that I asked about properties not connected to a main sewer, which received a concession under the rates system but no concession under the poll tax system. People in those properties will have to pay the full poll tax in addition to charges for entering the sewer. I also asked about corner shops where the person living above the shop will have to pay poll tax as well as paying the business rate for the shop. The hon. Member for Calder Valley said that those anomalies would be amended. What has happened about those anomalies?

Mr. Thompson: I have put those points to my hon. Friend the Minister. I am pleased that in this new spirit of glasnost Labour Members are now making sensible and reasonable suggestions. Had they done that three years ago, we should have had a much better tax. It is a shame that Labour Members are not in the Chamber tonight—they have run away from this debate in their masses, leaving only the Labour Whips.

Mr. Allen McKay: If the hon. Gentleman cares to examine the reports of the Committee stage of the Local Government Finance Bill which introduced the poll tax, he will discover that all those amendments were suggested, but the Government arrogantly refused even to consider them.

Mr. Thompson: I think not, Sir.

I hope that Calderdale council will accept one of the two budgets to which I have referred. Unfortunately, the safety net—£137 this year—will be unwound perhaps over three or more years. Although the business rate will rise with inflation and we expect revenue support grant to increase in the same way, the safety net will unwind giving us less and less.

Therefore, it is imperative that all councils should do as the hon. Member for Rochdale (Sir C. Smith) suggested and constantly re-examine spending that in the past they have taken for granted without having regard to the ratepayer who seems to have been a hidden person.

Reference has been made to married women who do not work and the poll tax. How do people budget their accounts? Surely couples sit down together and say, "Look, love, we've got the electricity bill to pay, the rates bill to pay, the water bill and then there's the car—are we going to Malaga or Malta or are we going to our pal's little place in Bridlington?" Apparently it is a revelation to Labour Members to learn that that is how people budget their accounts. One wonders whom Labour Members are visiting at the moment.

The safety net and the rebates have left anomalies which are difficult to explain to people in our surgeries and advice centres. There is a sewing shop in Todmorden in which every lady pays a different community charge. They told me that they had thought that they would all pay the same but because of transitional relief and rebates they all pay a different charge. Anomalies will crop up everywhere. We have already heard about farms. I received a letter today from Mrs. Janet Nelson of Todmorden asking me about Methodist ministers and the way in which they receive remuneration. I will pass the letter to my hon. Friend the Minister and discuss it with him. Indeed, I have several hundred other letters to give him and I am sure that we shall be able to reach some kind of accommodation.

The double rating of holiday homes seems to be causing a great deal of distress, as the hon. Member for Rochdale explained, but my hon. Friend the Minister should not let local authorities off in relation to their void houses. Local Government should not be allowed to avoid being charged twice, three times, four times or even five times for those houses. They should be charged as much as possible for the empty houses that have led to so much homelessness.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, West referred to students and my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough mentioned double charging. Much still remains to be done to get this revolutionary new community charge right, and we shall press on and do it.

6.16 pm

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): The hon. Member for Calder Valley (Mr. Thompson) believes that the poll tax can be reformed. I do not agree. It cannot be reformed; it can only be abolished. The poll tax is fundamentally flawed and is not based in any shape or form on the ability to pay. Any such taxation must be unfair and must throw up a series of anomalies. That is precisely what the poll tax has done.

The Government had no mandate to introduce the poll tax in Scotland. It is one of the most hated taxation systems of modern times. The Government have not learned from the Scottish lesson and England is now adjusting to the fact that the chickens have come home to roost. There have been a series of demands for changes or improvements in the poll tax. Those calls come as a great irony to the Scots who have had to live with the tax. There was no talk of improvements when Conservative Members inflicted the ghastly tax on the Scottish people more than a year ago. Now that the reality is dawning in England, Conservative Members will feel the full force of public opinion as people discover exactly what the tax is and what it does.

Scotland has been the guinea-pig for the poll tax and it has proved it to be wrong-headed and disastrous. It is callous and unfair for all the people on whom it is imposed, and it does absolutely nothing to assist local government funding or finance. The Scottish National party warned that the tax would be a bureaucratic nightmare. In Scotland, staff morale is low and there is stress among those who must impose the tax.

The poll tax is unworkable. The people in local government are paying the penalty for it. In Scotland there have been more than 2 million changes in the registers. That will be as nothing when the tax is imposed on English cities such as London, which has a large transient population. The tax is bureaucratic and expensive to implement. Computers in Scotland have been spewing out ever-increasing numbers of poll tax books and other bits of paper. The rebate application forms are massive and their demands for information about private citizens are impertinent and deter people from applying.

The poll tax is costly, inefficient and massively bureaucratic. The SNP warned about in-built expense and

the difficulties of collection. It cannot be otherwise with annual updates and clumsy rebate systems to try to iron out the inherent unfairness of the tax. Again, my party warned about anomalies and unfairness in a tax that is not based on ability to pay. Scotland has suffered——

Mr. Malcolm Moss (Cambridgeshire, North-East): The hon. Gentleman has said that.

Mr. Welsh: It cannot be said enough, as the hon. Gentleman will find in his own constituency as anti-poll tax feeling in England grows. The hon. Gentleman helped to inflict this tax upon my country and did nothing to change the anomalies in it. That is what I find objectionable. It is well worth repeating that.

Anomaly after anomaly was thrown up by the tax as it was implemented in Scotland, as English hon. Members have been finding out. There are problems for students, student nurses, people who suffer from Alzheimer's disease and other diseases, housewives who are fully charged and are unable to earn income, and so on. That circumstance could have been foreseen by the Government as they introduced the tax over a year ago in Scotland.

This taxation system is riddled with unfairness and anomalies. The Scottish experience gives fair warning of the problems to Wales and England. Annually updated registers have been a bureaucratic disaster. It is a highly expensive tax to collect. If Conservative Members are worried about expense to poll tax payers, they should think about that very expense of the collection of the tax being imposed on poll tax payers.

Again, the scope for poll tax non-payment campaigns, which have led to about 1 million Scots paying little or nothing in protest against this ghastly tax, will be as nothing compared with the effect of and the opportunities for non-payment in English cities. No amount of ministerial mumping or accusations about law breaking will prevent that from happening as people take the protest into their own hands in the only way that is open to them as free citizens in a free country to protest against a tax that they totally abhor. The poll tax is not based on ability to pay and merely transfers the unfairness of rates. Rates were unfair in terms of property, and the poll tax is unfair in terms of people. Both taxes are levied without reference to ability to pay, and the Government must tackle that problem. No amount of banding or any other messing around will replace the need for a local income tax.

I contrast the anomalies, unfairness and callousness of the poll tax with our belief that ability to pay must be the criterion of any taxation system. On all counts, a local income tax scores. It has a low cost of collection. Unlike the poll tax, it would use the existing tax collection machinery. If a person has little or no income, he or she will pay little or no income tax, which is fair. Assessed on the same basis as national income tax, local income tax could easily be integrated into the existing system. With LIT there would be no need for the present Government's panoply of sheriff officers, warrant sales, local bureaucrats, annual registers, and a complicated structure of rebates. Indeed, there would be no need for massive collection costs and the other paraphernalia of the poll tax or of the roof tax.

We believe that people should pay for public services according to their means and be able to use them according to their needs. People who are too poor to pay income tax would not have to pay local income tax either. Local income tax would also guarantee civil liberties because there would be no registration forms, no Tory snoopers checking the value of a person's house, and no means-tested rebate applications. All the information required for local income tax is already collected by the Inland Revenue. There would be no need whatsoever for council officials to know the financial circumstances of an individual. A local income tax system would not need to be implemented from scratch because relevant information on employment and wages is already stored in national income tax records. Certainly an SNP Government would abolish the poll tax immediately, as indeed could a Labour Government if they had the courage of their convictions and the will to do so.

Our calculations show that a basic local income tax would be about 5·5p, and the higher rate of about 10p in the pound would be sufficient to replace current poll tax levels. No amount of fiddling with gross amounts and the other aberrations that the Government have tried to introduce into the debate will change the fact that local income tax is cheaper to collect, efficient and fair.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): How will the hon. Gentleman do that?

Mr. Welsh: With the figures that I have mentioned—5·5p and 10p in the pound, the higher rate level. They are maximum figures. They reflect a situation in which this Administration have slashed their contribution to local authorities from 75 per cent. down to 55 per cent.

We propose major changes in central Government support for local authorities, which would substantially reduce the burden on local taxation. Our proposed responsibility grant, needs element and equalisation grant would mean that local income tax contributions would focus on purely local expenditure and would obviously mean minimal variations in local income tax levels throughout Scotland. Unlike other parties—the exception is the SLD, which has done something on these lines—the SNP proposes a package of local government finance measures allied to the reform of the structure of local government, and in-built guarantees of the independence, status and standing of local authorities in Scotland.

Too often those problems have been viewed in isolation. Finance is reformed without any thought of the structure or status of local authorities. Structure is reformed without any thought of the finance or status of authorities. It is time that local authorities were given their due standing, status and importance within our society and given a package of measures that considers them in the round and within their context as part of the democratic process of providing services for the people.

Our income tax system would take Scotland into the mainstream of European local government finance, along with countries such as Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland and West Germany. In joining with Labour Members in opposing local income tax, the Tories have taken us into the mainstream of only one other comparable country, Papua New Guinea, and even that country is now retreating from the poll tax. The SNP proposes that, by adopting a local income tax, the United Kingdom and Scotland would join the mainstream of European methods of financing local authorities. We propose a package of measures to restore local government to independence, status, structure and finance, which will let it do its proper work on behalf of the people of Scotland. Anything less

[Mr. Welsh]

would be a betrayal of Scotland's interests. That is precisely what the Labour and Tory parties have been doing for too long.

It is about time that local government finance were treated properly, with a sensible, fair system for domestic local taxpayers and a much-needed reform of business taxes. The Government have got themselves into a massive fankle over local government finance, which is not good for local authorities or for the people whom they serve. Let Wales and England be warned. The Scottish example clearly shows what a disaster the poll tax is. Be warned and dump this unwanted and unfair tax.

6.27 pm

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I shall not adopt the line advocated by the SNP, which is the non-payment of the community charge. That line advocates illegality, and that must be wrong.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Greenway: Certainly not.

Will my hon. Friend the Minister consider exempting people under 25 from the community charge? *[Laughter.]* Perhaps that is a radical suggestion. Up to the age of 25, young people are getting married and are required to save money and to establish themselves. That often entails the purchase of a home. Additionally, such people are new in their jobs and are usually on low pay and therefore are not equipped to make the contributions to local expenditure that people over 25 can. We should do all we can to encourage people at all ages, but certainly up to the age of 25, to take time out to improve their qualifications. The exemption of under-25s from the community charge would greatly assist youngsters to improve themselves in that way.

I have told the Minister in writing that I welcome the separation of husband and wife for taxation purposes, but that we should carry that principle into the community charge. We could do that in terms of savings by couples and individuals. For example, a man and wife could be assessed separately for savings and not have them amalgamated. I appreciate that such a system might be difficult to implement and could be open to abuse, but savings should be assessed separately because husband and wife are charged separately for the community charge. While I envisage difficulties in applying my suggestion, the principle of it is right and fair.

Difficulties lie in the way of any form of local taxation, bearing in mind the way in which local expenditure generally is administered by Labour compared with Conservative authorities, leaving aside any SLD-controlled authorities. Local taxation, like national taxation, as implemented by the Labour party is always high. Indeed, Labour supporters pride themselves on that, and to illustrate it one need only consider what has happened in my borough of Ealing.

Up to 1986, the Labour party was describing Ealing's rates as a disgrace, since they were the lowest in west London. We were proud of that, and the services provided in Ealing were as good as those provided anywhere. The Labour party was ashamed of the fact that on one side, the Conservative represented side, of Whitton avenue east, in my constituency, the rates were half those levied on the other side of the road, which then lay, as it still does, in the then Labour-controlled borough of Brent.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): I remind my hon. Friend that the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), who is not in his place, said it was shocking that people were now getting much lower bills. In other words, the desire for increased charges is still part of Labour philosophy. Ratepayers or charge payers in Labour-controlled areas must remember to vote accordingly at the next elections.

Mr. Greenway: The nation must heed the attitude of Labour supporters, who expect the community charge and local taxation to be high. They will see that it is high. In Ealing, from 1986 until Labour was rejected a few days ago, that was their attitude, and they would continue to adopt it nationally if they were elected to government.

The Labour party, while in control in Ealing, increased the rates by 65 per cent. at a stroke in 1987. Happily, the authority was rate-capped by the Government, following a campaign conducted by my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), who I am glad to see in his place, and me. That obliged the authority to reduce the rates in 1988 by 25 per cent. But the authority put the rates up again last year by 32 per cent.—the moment it got the opportunity to take such a step—and Labour's community charge in the area this year represents an increase, in the view of most of my constituents, of about 55 per cent. in rates equivalent. In other words, Labour is always high-spending and high-charging.

The same Labour council increased industrial rates in 1987 by 57 per cent., and it is worth considering the effect of that. It meant, for example, that Taylor Woodrow had to pay £315,000 more in rates. The company had to earn an extra £15 million simply to stand still, providing no extra profits or jobs.

That Labour council added £450,000 to the rates of Ealing hospital—so much did it care for the sick and disabled. About £750,000 extra in rates was charged to the Lyons group of companies, which employs 2,500 people. That increase resulted in some of them losing their jobs because the company had to find the money to pay that extra sum to the local Labour council. The company's prices were forced up, with all that that entailed.

When industrial rates were increased by 57 per cent., people locally had to pay more in the shops for everything, including haircuts. Domestic rates having also gone up by 65 per cent., no wonder my pensioner constituents either could not pay or were having to go without food to finance the high rates forced on them by the then Ealing Labour council.

I cannot understand why Labour supporters are so inhumane as not to care about the matters that I have described. They go on forcing up rates and charges. But this year, in the local elections, they paid the price, having forced on my constituents a community charge of £435. Its own estimate was that last year the community charge equivalent to the rates was about £300, but despite that it forced on the local people a community charge of £435.

The Labour authority wanted to inflict a community charge of about £500, but happily, having campaigned strongly against that, we managed to force the authority to reduce it to £435, which is still an outrageous charge for my constituents, who are being forced to pay 250 per cent.

more in local taxation than they were paying under the former Conservative council four years ago. No wonder the people of Ealing threw out that Labour council with such relish.

We are invited in this debate to consider the system. In doing that, I must highlight an abuse of the system by Ealing Labour council. It did not send out people's rebates at the same time as the demands for £435. It sent out a full demand for that sum, thereby causing consternation to many people. Some of them came to my surgery and said in effect, "Harry, I have been asked to pay £435. Look at my building society book. I have £1,500 saved and I am on income support. Surely I am entitled to a rebate."

I discovered, as a result of careful questioning of staff at the town hall, that 6,000 rebates in the area would not be processed until after 3 May. Let us remember that the elections took place on 3 May. The Labour party, then in control of Ealing, wanted to frighten the people of Ealing into believing that the community charge would be higher for everyone than it needed to be for many of them. That was a nasty and wicked abuse. It was totally heartless and showed that Labour does not care. I am happy to say that rebates are now being processed fast by the new Conservative administration in Ealing, and many of my constituents will receive good news.

While Labour was in control in Ealing, services deteriorated in many respects. Many letters went unanswered by town hall officials, and I was repeatedly told, "I have written to the town hall and not received an answer." The quality of street cleansing, the expenditure on education and the regularity of refuse collection services have all be reduced. In no way have extra services been provided commensurate with the additional charges that people were asked to meet.

It is reasonable to ask where all the money went. Some of it went on an equal opportunities unit which, I am happy to report, is now being abolished. It must have been wrong to put money into race equality and women's committees of various types, because such steps advantage only a section of the community. The same applies when money is put into committees concerned with gays and lesbians: it seeks to advantage, as the Labour council did —this happened not only in Ealing but in many parts of the country—some sections of the community compared with the rest. Lord Justice Scarman described that as the surest way to cause unrest, for such actions take away any sense of fairness that people have. Not only is such mis-expenditure of money wrong, but it causes social unease.

What happened in Ealing is typical of the Labour party, nationally and locally. The way in which the Labour council acted was appalling. Consider, for example, appointment panels for head and other teachers. A headmaster seeking to appoint a teacher would have a representative of the local women's committee on one side of him and another from the race unit on the other. They would sit there on either side of the headmaster marking the interviewer for such things as bad body language or any other action or comment by which he might display prejudice.

Prior to the election of the Conservative council, Labour-controlled Ealing council had established 44 steps that had to be followed to secure the appointment of a head teacher. No wonder it took so long to fill such posts and no wonder so many posts were vacant, not only in schools, but in the borough's departments as a whole. It was an absolutely hopeless and impossible system. That sort of abuse had to come to an end, and it is now ending.

Finally, Opposition Members might like to know that the new Conservative Ealing council has, among the other flags that used to be run up above the town hall, the flag of the African National Congress, which it wants to sell cheap. The Labour council used to run up flags in support of causes in which the Ealing ratepayers and now the community charge payers have no interest whatsover. That sort of abuse is now ending—thank God.

6.40 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): This has been a productive and interesting debate, not least because of the number of Conservative Members who have pleaded for changes to the poll tax in a way that has helped to emphasise the stupidity of it and of the way in which it operates.

My hon. Friend the Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) welcomed the Minister to his first appearance at the Dispatch Box in this capacity. In the circumstances, I do not blame the Minister for speaking almost entirely from a prepared text. When dealing with this subject, it is extremely wise for a Minister to ensure that he has first received advice from his lawyers. However, the Minister made a fair point about the injustice of the rating system and the need for it to be reformed. For many years, my party and the Conservative party have agreed that the rating system should be changed, but we do not agree with the Government's solution.

The Minister then referred to the various options that have been put forward. In seeking to discredit local income tax, he made some play of the calculation of equalisation grant, as if the equalisation grant would be calculated differently for a local income tax than for rates or the poll tax. The equalisation grant will apply in all cases and will be drawn from the same source in every case—from general taxation. It is therefore disingenuous of the Government to try to attack one form of local government financing on a basis that could be considered valid for every other form in exactly the same way.

Mr. Bill Walker *rose*——

Mr. Bruce: No, I cannot give way, because I have only a few minutes in which to speak and I should like to reply to many points.

The Minister made the reasonable—although not entirely fair—point that everyone should pay for local government services. The principle that people should pay is generally accepted, but surely everyone should pay according to their ability to pay. People who do not have an income cannot reasonably be expected to contribute but, of course, they are unreasonably expected to do so by a Conservative Government. They expect people to pay even if they do not have the means to do so. The Government have failed to address that point. They have created a rebate scheme which is extremely cumbersome and bureaucratic, and which approaches the problem from the wrong end. It would be much better if income was the first factor to be taken into account.

The Minister then drew out what we are now quite familiar with from the Government—a load of bogus figures about local income tax to try to discredit that idea. Anybody can produce any figures out of the air to try to

[Mr. Bruce]

discredit any tax. I remind the Government that, when they first proposed the introduction of the poll tax, we were all expecting to have to pay less than people are having to pay. The Government are therefore in no position to lecture any other party about the inaccuracy of its forecasts. I digress a little by referring to the Government's failure accurately to forecast the rate of inflation, the balance of payments or the level of interest rates. We need no lectures from the Government on how our system should be determined.

Local income tax is a simple system. The mechanism that we propose is based on a year-end settlement, the level to be determined by equalisation grants that would be calculated in exactly the same way as for rates and the community charge.

With a local income tax, we are effectively talking about persuading central Government to give up some of the tax they take and to allow the local authorities to take that tax directly to ensure that they have access to the revenue from the public at large—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] Yes, certainly —rather than the money being transferred back from central Government, who then pretend that it is their money. It is the people's money that is being recycled by central Government who want to have absolute control over every form of public service in the country. That is a matter of principle for them.

No hon. Member has referred to the buoyancy that would be produced by a local income tax or to the total lack of buoyancy that exists with the poll tax. The hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) made absolutely clear what she thinks of local government, which is basically that it should be abolished and that central Government should control everything——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman *rose——*

Mr. Bruce: No, I shall not give way.

The poll tax has no buoyancy whatsoever, and because it accounts for only 20 or 25 per cent. of the total revenue of the local authorities——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman *rose——*

Mr. Bruce: No. [HON. MEMBERS: "Give way."] Conservative Members would do well to listen to this. That means that, if a local authority wants to increase its overall budget by 5 per cent., it must increase its poll tax by 25 per cent.—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Bruce: Over 10 years, that would cause——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Gentleman deliberately to misrepresent what I said? I have never said what he said I said.

Mr. Speaker: I am afraid that allegation is frequently made across the Chamber.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) should give way.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Bruce: Over 10 years, the lack of buoyancy of the poll tax will destroy all effective local government. The Conservative party knows that that is true—and that is its fundamental objective. I believe that the buoyancy of an alternative system is far to be preferred.

The Minister's other argument related to accountability. He appeared to argue that a local income tax would not make the local authorities accountable to their taxpayers. That is extraordinary. One of the great planks upon which the Conservative party has campaigned around the country during the past 10 years has been their commitment to lower the standard rate of income tax. If Conservative Members do not believe that income tax is a tax based on accountability, why have they spent so much time campaigning for such a reduction? They know that income tax is by far the most accountable form of tax. A local income tax seems to us to be a good and fair system. If it is good enough for central Government, it should certainly be good enough for local government.

The hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) spoke on behalf of the Labour party. I waited with interest to hear Labour's answer to the problems, but I continue to wait, because the answer never came. The question that is left hanging in the air is: if the Labour party were to win the next election—which is by no means certain yet—what would be its first measure to try to deal with the poll tax? Would it not be to reintroduce the rates? Is that not what we really expect the Labour party to do? If that is not the case, the Labour party should explain what it would introduce to carry it through the first Parliament. The hon. Member for Brightside did not give us an answer to that point.

The Labour party has two policies—one for England and Wales, and one for Scotland. There is nothing wrong with that in principle, but from what we have heard of the roof tax, I must conclude that it is a roof that is full of flaws. I do not believe that that idea will gain much support. Indeed, opinion polls in Scotland have shown that it is even more unpopular than the poll tax, which is some achievement for the Labour party.

The hon. Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) called for temporary relief from the poll tax for married women who do not work. That is all very well, but why should the relief be only temporary? Either married women have an income and can pay, or they do not have an income and should not pay. To suggest that they should not pay the poll tax for a year but that thereafter they should pay seems simply a plea for some device to get the Conservative party through a general election—nothing more, nothing less. If the Government are seriously considering such a relief, they should remember what happened in the Budget in relation to Scotland and the poll tax. Married women in Scotland who do not work have been paying the poll tax for 14 months.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) made the fair point that there is no effective local system for financing local government and that we should be addressing a means of securing that for the future. He also said that local income tax was about getting central Government to give up some of their revenue to local authorities. I agree with that.

The hon. Member for Calder Valley (Mr. Thompson) referred to rebates and to transitional relief. He boasted about his local council's efficiency in administering them, but the figures that he gave demonstrated that the poll tax is an absurd system. He mentioned the Government amendment, which refers to some 10 million people

receiving rebates and 7·5 million receiving transitional relief. If they were assessed on the basis of a local income tax, that bureaucracy would not be necessary.

In his peroration, the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) made the extraordinary plea for all people under the age of 25 to be exempted. That takes no account of their income. If they were working in the City and earning £100,000 a year, they would not pay the poll tax. What an absurd idea. Does he want to exempt them from income tax as well?

Everything that I have heard from Conservative Members proves that they know that this is a lousy poll tax that will destroy their political base in this country. The only fair system to deal with the problems to which they have alerted us is a local income tax.

6.50 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): I believe in giving credit where credit is due. Today the Social and Liberal Democrats have taken the opportunity provided by a debate initiated by them to publicise and subject to scrutiny their policies for paying for local government. What a contrast that is with the Labour party which, in a full-day debate on 25 April, refused to discuss its alternative of a roof tax. The Labour party had another chance today to lift the veil on its policy and perhaps give us a glimpse preview of what is to be revealed on Thursday, but where are the Labour Members? Has Labour taken that opportunity? No, it has not. Will it reveal its full alternative on Thursday? We think not. Will it ever reveal its alternative policy on what opinion polls tell us is one of the major issues of the moment—how to control and pay for local authority spending?

Clearly, if the Labour party is to have any credibility with the electorate, it must come clean with its policy. As early-day motion 1028 makes clear, the pressure is now on from both sides of the House for the Labour party to announce its proposals. Is it that it cannot say, that it will not say, or that it dare not say? I think—particularly after listening to the speech of the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett)—that the truth is that it dare not say. It is as frightened of disclosing its alternative to the community charge as it is of condemning unequivocally the 28 Labour Members who are refusing to pay.

To deal with what was said by the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), the debate has shown major flaws in the proposal for a local income tax. In Scotland, 44 per cent. of adults would not pay a local income tax, so it would be a soft option for them, but for everyone else it would be a crippling burden. Those unfortunate enough to bear the remaining burden would face unacceptably high and punitive tax bills. Taking the hon. Gentleman's district in Grampian as an example, this year's community charge is £252, whereas the local income tax bill for a single person on average earnings would be no less than £732—almost three times as much. Across Scotland, local income tax levels of 10·4p in the pound would be necessary to maintain the revenue from community charges this year. Clearly, a local income tax would be a direct attack on the ordinary working people whom Conservative Members seek to protect.

My hon. Friends the Members for Calder Valley (Mr. Thompson), for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) and for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) made useful contributions——

Mr. Douglas: I am intrigued by the inter-relationship between the hon. Member for Calder Valley (Mr. Thompson) and the Conservative Front Bench. He gave the impression that conversations between himself and Front-Bench spokesmen could solve virtually everything. Can the Minister enlighten the House as to how that mysterious process takes place?

Mr. Chope: My hon. Friend the Member for Calder Valley commands massive respect on the Conservative Front Bench. I am sure that that explains the position. He made a witty and informed speech to the House today, and everyone listened to it with interest.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North reminded us how awful the previous Ealing council had been. He must take much of the credit for ridding Ealing of that council. He reminded us how heartless that administration was.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough also participated in the debate. I was to have visited his constituency today, and I am disappointed that I could not keep the appointment. My consolation is to have heard my hon. Friend's thoughtful and forceful contribution, his ideas for improvements in the community charge system and his unequivocal rejection of the alternatives—local income tax and domestic rating.

My hon. Friend referred particularly to the problem of high-spending local authorities. He said that in his area of Northamptonshire community charges this year represented the equivalent of a 30 per cent. increase in the rates. It is the level of the community charge which causes most concern, but some community charges are high because local authorities have massively increased their spending this year. There has been a 20 per cent. increase in net revenue spending by local authorities in real terms between 1979 and 1989, but between 1989-90 and 1990-91, there has been a 7 per cent. increase in real terms. That is why community charges are so much higher than we would have wished and why, if the domestic rating system were still in place, rates would have soared. That is why we hope that local authorities will start getting a grip on their expenditure and will try to make the real savings that are possible.

The debate has again shown how cynical the Labour party is. A former Labour Member, Mr. Kilroy-Silk, said only about three weeks ago:

> "Today's Labour party has no ideological purpose, no philosophy, no coherent policy and, sadly, no principles . . . It is instead motivated almost exclusively by a ruthless drive for power that has compelled its leaders to twist and turn, to duck and dive, to wheedle and weave".

In no area of policy is that more apparent than it is in local government finance. The Labour myth is that high community charges cannot be avoided; fortunately, recent evidence shows that they can. If that is true, how is it that in Hillingdon the incoming Conservative administration can cut its charge by no less than £77 per adult—£24 more than the cap proposed by the Government? In Ealing the Conservatives have managed to make massive savings in a short time by cleaning out the Augean stables—and what trash they have uncovered! In Merton, where the local electors chose a Labour council, they have already been given notice by the new Labour leader of the council of the price that they will have to pay for that decision—an additional £255 per adult. That is just for a start. While blaming the previous Conservative administration for the necessity for such a charge, the new Labour council is busy

[Mr. Chope]

increasing the bureaucracy, with more committees, more staff, an expanded press and publicity department, and more editions of the council newspaper, but it will need more than editions of the council newspaper to justify the massive increases in spending that are proposed. Labour's local government policies have never changed—they are in favour of high and frivolous expenditure. Only today, a report in one of our most widely read national newspapers stated:

"Loony councillors were under fire last night after forking out poll tax money on a party for deaf lesbians".

Do we need to conduct a poll about which councils were responsible for that? Labour's Hackney council has contributed £10,000 and Haringey and Camden are chipping in £3,000 each.

In some respects, the Labour party is changing. Certainly, it is trying to change its image. In general, however, it is back to its old evil ways, wasting the community charge payers' money. We have seen——

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland) *rose in his place and claimed to move*, That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to*.

Question put accordingly, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 26, Noes 266.

Division No. 221] **[7.00 pm**

AYES

Alton, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Douglas, Dick
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Livsey, Richard
Maclennan, Robert
Smith, Sir Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Wallace, James
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wigley, Dafydd

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mrs. Ray Michie, and
Mr. Ronnie Fearn.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bendall, Vivian
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brazier, Julian
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & D'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*

Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alastair Goodlad and
Mr. Tony Durant.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments):—*

The House divided: Ayes 252, Noes 69.

Division No. 222] **[7.13 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bendall, Vivian
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, A *(Brighton K'pto'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Brazier, Julian
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Chris
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chalker, Rt Hon Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Tony
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby North)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Macfarlane, Sir Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon Chris *(Bath)*
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stokes, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John

Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alastair Goodlad, and
Mr. Tony Durant.]

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Alton, David
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blunkett, David
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Cartwright, John
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dixon, Don
Douglas, Dick
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fearn, Ronald
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Hardy, Peter
Haynes, Frank
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kilfedder, James
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McFall, John
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
Maclennan, Robert
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Mullin, Chris
Nellist, Dave
O'Brien, William
Patchett, Terry
Quin, Ms Joyce
Rogers, Allan
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Walley, Joan
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Graham Allen and
Mr. George J. Buckley.

Question accordingly agreed to.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House believes that most adults should contribute towards the cost of local services with relief for the less well off; welcomes the embodiment of those principles in the community charge and notes in particular that 10 million people have received bills reduced by rebates whilst 7·5 million have been protected by transitional relief; welcomes the willingness of the Government to listen to constructive suggestions for further improving the new arrangements; and contrasts the fairness and clarity of the community charge with the injustice and impracticability of a local income tax favoured by the Social and Liberal Democrats and the total lack of any clear proposals from the Labour Party.'.

LONDON DOCKLANDS RAILWAY BILL

(By Order.)

Read a Second time and committed.

London Underground (Victoria) Bill

(By Order)

Order for Second Reading read.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read a Second time.—*[Mr. Thorne.]*

7.24 pm

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): I will be guided by you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I wish to make some comments on the Bill. The Bill may have some merit; I want to take the opportunity to find out whether it has.

All hon. Members who represent London constituencies realise the importance of the underground. I see my hon. Friend the Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser), but I do not see any other hon. Members from south London in the Chamber. Hon. Members who represent constituencies and live in south London know about the appalling transport services which our constituents have to live with day after day. I want to speak specifically about the Northern line. Hon. Members, irrespective of party, have taken up with London Regional Transport the problems faced by our constituents—the irregularity of services, the condition of the trains, on-going problems with escalators that are not working——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman so early in his speech, but I must point out that this is a narrow Bill which deals purely with the construction of a new passenger concourse and subway at the underground station at Victoria. It is restricted to that.

Mr. Cox: I note your comment, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is why I said at the outset that I wished to speak on the Bill. I wish to develop the points because cost is involved in the Bill. Surely we are not being asked to approve something that does not involve expenditure. I am open to correction by the Minister or by someone else, but if the development involves expenditure, I assume that that expenditure will be made via LRT.

I and my constituents, as well as the constituents of many other hon. Members, would like to know why priority has been given to development at Victoria station. I do not see any figures in the Bill, but we know what work costs, and no doubt considerable expenditure will be incurred. I want to know how much the work will cost and who has given approval for it. Where has the money been found when I and other hon. Members who represent constituencies in south London, particularly constituencies through which the Northern line runs, are always being told by the authorities, "We know you have problems, but we do not have any money to make improvements"? We have been told that repeatedly during transport questions. When we have asked the Secretary of State for Transport what will happen to improve certain lines, especially the Northern line, he has said on countless occasions "Yes, I am aware that conditions are not good, and that there are staffing problems on stations, and escalators that do not work."

My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) is familiar with the constituency I represent because for a long time he was the Greater London council member for that area. He has dealt with the problems that I am seeking to raise in this debate, and he will know about them. I want to find out how this money has been found.

Why is this matter regarded as such a priority when there are hon. Members who know of greater priorities in their constituencies, through which the Northern line of London Regional Transport runs? We are repeatedly told by Ministers in this House, and in correspondence with officials of London Regional Transport, that they would like to help us, but do not have the money to do it.

What can I say to my constituents when they write to me complaining about the story I have told them about no money being available, although the supposed concern is there, when they get to know—as they will over the next few days—that we in the House tonight have discussed a Bill that makes improvements at the Victoria underground station? Apparently, there is no problem about finding money for that. My constituents have problems that have not merely arisen during the past few weeks or months, but have existed for years and years. What am I supposed to say when my constituents ask me what I was doing in Parliament when a Bill was being discussed which, in the eyes of the officials of London Regional Transport, was of such priority and importance when conditions on the Northern line, which they are forced to use to go to work, are so bad? They will say to me, "All we are ever told by you as our Member of Parliament—you tell us that it is what you are told by the Secretary of State for Transport—is that there is no money."

I shall not pursue the matter too far because I appreciate the generosity that Mr. Deputy Speaker has shown me, but it is a crucial issue. The problem for hon. Members, irrespective of party, is that there are far too few occasions when they can bring up issues related to the London Underground (Victoria) Bill. I believe that I have a duty to raise certain points, and it may be that other hon. Members will seek to raise other issues. We have a duty to the people we represent.

On the Jameson show—a popular show on Radio 2—I heard someone talking about the Northern line, which is apparently the oldest line of the entire London underground service. Jameson said that he used it, but it was an utter disgrace and passengers were treated like cattle. That was what the presenter of a popular radio programme said this morning. Therefore, what I am saying now is what is generally accepted in many parts of south London. There may be hon. Members who represent other parts of London who can make comments similar to mine. It is up to them to do so.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way because he is obviously concerned about the Northern line, going through his constituency as it does. Is he certain of his facts in one respect? I ask this as a genuine question because I am not altogether certain of my facts, as happens from time to time. Is he certain that the Northern line is the oldest line? I always thought that it was the Bakerloo line. I thought that the Northern line tunnel was the longest tunnel in Europe, but I did not think it was the oldest line. I thought that the oldest line was the Bakerloo line. However, my hon. Friend is slightly older than me, so perhaps he can remember.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am sure that the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) will know better than I, but I do not think that the Northern line goes through Victoria.

Mr. Cox: I take the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West. I will try to contact Jameson to ask him whether he got his facts right. Without pursuing the matter too far, I think I have made my point.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): I am sure that my hon. Friend recognises that there are considerable problems with the interchange at Victoria station between the Victoria line, which runs through my constituency, and the District line in the main railway. I am concerned about possible loss of life and limb because of the crush. I assure my hon. Friend that the Bill is needed for that reason, and I hope that he will give us an assurance that he is not going to do a Livingstone on the Bill.

Mr. Cox: In view of the bitter attack that I made on my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) about his behaviour in the House two weeks ago over a Bill to which I was committed, I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) that I shall not attempt to do that. I take his point, made from his own experience, about the improvements needed.

I am not questioning my hon. Friend's point or what the Bill's promoter is saying. I want some assurance that the Minister will outline why he believes that it is a priority, bearing in mind what I have said several times, that I and other hon. Members, irrespective of our parties, know that there are the most appalling problems for our constituents who have to use the Northern line service. I want some assurance that I can convey to my constituents so that I can say, "Yes, the matter has been looked at, but the feeling is that the Bill is the priority."

I am not aware of how you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have to come to work in the House but, without doubt, there are times when you have to use London underground services. I am sure that you, like many hon. Members and their constituents, feel utter despair at the conditions in which you have to travel—and they do not improve. In stations in my constituency there are escalators because of the depth of the services to which people have to walk, and when those escalators are not working, elderly people or mothers with young children face enormous problems. Sadly, we never get over those problems.

I have tried to make it clear that I do not wish to obstruct the Bill—my hon. Friend the Member for Norwood asked me about that—but I have a duty to my constituents. When a Bill comes under the auspices of London Regional Transport I have a duty to make forcefully known in the Chamber the grave dissatisfaction of my constituents, and I am sure of other hon. Members representing adjoining constituencies, at the deplorable service and the lack of any meaningful improvement.

I hope that the Minister will not simply say, "Yes, I have heard what the hon. Member has said and I shall pass on his views." I hope that he will say, "Yes, we are actively working, in conjunction with London Regional Transport, to consider the sort of improvements that the hon. Member for Tooting has sought to develop in this evening's debate."

7.38 pm

Mr. Hugo Summerson (Walthamstow): The Victoria line serves my constituency of Walthamstow, and many of my constituents use it. They come down to Victoria and then disperse among the other lines or go to work in office developments around Victoria.

[Mr. Hugo Summerson]

As the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) said, the crush at Victoria station during the rush hour is often extremely dangerous. I am sure that hon. Members know that there are occasions when the entrances to the underground at Victoria station have to be closed. People are not admitted because there is already overcapacity on the platforms and a danger that they may even be pushed under trains by the crush.

I support the Bill. I am sure that it will eventually result in a better service for those using the Victoria line and for my constituents. Doubtless there will be grumbles and complaints while the work is being done, but we must look forward to the time when the work is completed, when the station is safer and more pleasant and the Victoria line is once again efficient and a pleasure for my constituents to use.

7.39 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): The hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Summerson) was short and to the point. It is always a great pleasure to follow Neville Chamberlain's Parliamentary Private Secretary.

I do not wish to delay the Bill, and I do not intend to try to talk it out. That would be a formidable task, since we would have three hours all but 40 minutes in which to do it. However, I want to ask a few questions about the Bill and the procedures whereby it appears before us.

I remember when the Victoria line was opened. It is still the most reliable line, with some of the best techniques and technology, on the underground, and it is surprising that after 25 years the same technology has not been used on other lines.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) talked about the Northern line, or the misery line as it is called. Everyone who uses the Victoria line and Victoria station knows the difference between that and the Northern line. I would not like your learned Clerk, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to lean too near to you to suggest that I am out of order.

The Victoria line was extended to Brixton when I was a member of Lambeth borough council, along with my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone). I well remember when that line was opened. The Chancellor of the Exchequer was present on that occasion. I find it strange to look at the great Chancellor of the Exchequer today because all I can see is the vice-chairman of Lambeth housing committee, as he was then.

The Victoria line carries many people, and Victoria station is a great interchange which causes considerable concern for those who have to use it. Its layout is not good and many people have complained. Many tourists turn up there. People have to struggle through to the ticket points surrounded by people with back packs. They are welcome in our city—it is good to see young people here—but I wish that they would not all turn up with back packs and congregate at Victoria station. However, those hon. Members who say how uncomfortable Victoria station is make good and telling points with which all who use the Victoria line will sympathise.

Will the hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) say whether the Bill will cover the ticket barriers? The ticket barriers play an important part when it comes to easy entrance and egress at Victoria station. Those ticket barriers have upset many hon. Members. I am sorry that my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) is not here. He seems to be peculiarly upset by them. He is almost of a stature to slip underneath them. However, we all understand his point. I know of no other railway system in Europe where a ticket has to be put into a barrier in order to get in and to get out. That is nonsense. I hope that the hon. Member for Ilford, South will be able to offer us some relief on that.

Part II, page 4, clause 5(1) says:

> "Subject to the provisions of this Act, the Company may, for the purpose of constructing the works, enter upon, open, break up and interfere with so much of the surface of Victoria Street in the city of Westminster as lies within the limit of deviation."

I do not have the plans before me, so I do not know what the limit of deviation is, but will the hon. Gentleman assure us that Victoria street will not be completely disrupted by the work described in the Bill? I do not say that as a Member of Parliament who might find access to the Palace of Westminster hindered by roadworks. That would be a silly and elitist attitude to take. I use the London underground and I travel on the streets of London as much as any hon. Member, and one thing that I have noticed in recent years is the regularity with which our roads are being dug up, filled in and dug up again. It is appalling.

The Minister is new to his Department. It is good to see him again so soon after our excellent debate on Friday on the channel tunnel. But he must know that in his Department lies the Horne report which desperately needs implementation in legislation. That could cover the sort of disruption to Victoria street that is proposed in the Bill. I hope that the Minister will say something about that when he replies. If he could tell us that the Horne report will form the basis of legislation at some early juncture, he would receive approbation and support from the Opposition Benches. The problems of the roads in our capital city need to be dealt with.

The Bill proposes more disruption in a street close to the Houses of Parliament. I assume that, because it is an important thoroughfare, the inconvenience will not be too great. From time to time, important people walk up and down it. Only the other day, I saw Lord Wilson of Rievaulx ambling along Victoria street. I would not like him to fall into a hole that had been dug there, perhaps especially for him. It could be a devilish Tory plot. I would not want him or anybody else, whether they are of great grand name or of no great name at all, to be beset by problems as they walk down Victoria street. But that is an important point. Because it is so close to this place, I am sure that the work will be done quickly and with the minimum of disruption.

That contrasts with the attitude taken by the statutory undertakers and others who have the power to dig up our roads. There seems to be a never-ending list of organisations, companies and individuals who have the right to dig up London's roads. I am sure that the attitude that will be adopted in Victoria street will contrast with that adopted in the east end of London, where the roads are dug up and left for two or three weeks. We in the east end are used to having to put up with the second-rate, other than in my representation of Newham, North-West.

It is assumed that we are not greatly worried about the manner in which our streets are left, but we in Newham are

very angry about the way in which we are treated. I trust that the people of Victoria will not be treated as we are in the London borough of Newham. I am sure that, if there is a great deal of disruption in Victoria street, the formidable Lady Porter will be banging on somebody's door in order to let the Minister know that that is the sort of thing up with which she will not put. Will the hon. Member for Ilford, South assure us that the disruption to Victoria street will be kept to a minimum?

I am also worried about part III, which gives the promoters power to acquire land. That lies close to my interest in the provisions of the Bill and the recommendations of the Joint Committee on Private Bill Procedure. I was a member of the Committee. We reported to the House in July 1988. Our report included recommendations about changes to the private Bill procedure. There has still been no debate to enable the House to vote on the Committee's recommendations to improve the private Bill procedure. Every hon. Member admits that that procedure is unsatisfactory. I do not blame London Regional Transport for using this method to circumvent Westminster city council's planning committee. I hope that the hon. Member for Ilford, South will be able to say what discussions took place between London Regional Transport and Westminster city council's planning committee. Is that committee completely happy with the Bill's provisions?

One of our complaints about this and other Bills is that they allow promoters to circumvent the normal planning procedures that were devised by Parliament to protect everyone, particularly those who wish to protest about a compulsory purchase order or about plans. A number of promoters, including London Regional Transport and British Rail, are using the private Bill procedure to get round all the awkwardness of having to go before a local authority, being rebuffed by its planning committee and then having to face a public inquiry and make their case before those who are protesting about the proposals. This Bill, like other private Bills, allows the promoters to circumvent all the safety valves that Parliament has built into the legislation that applies to planning applications.

The first recommendation in the report states:

"Promoters of a private bill should be required to prove before the committee on the bill that private legislation is necessary to secure the primary purpose of the bill."

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will say whether the Bill is necessary. That question would have to be answered in Committee, but if the Bill is not opposed tonight, it will not be considered by an opposed Bill Committee and the question will not be asked. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be able to confirm that powers are not provided for elsewhere that London Regional Transport could have used to secure its objectives. The first recommendation in the report is that the promoters must prove that they need a private Bill in order to secure their objectives.

The second recommendation states:

"Where the primary purpose may be authorised through other means, the committee on the bill should insist that those means be pursued first, and that the approval of Parliament be limited only to the specific components which require its authority."

I have sat on many private Bill Committees, and have chaired a number of them. It was an interesting experience in terms of learning about parliamentary procedure. However, it takes hon. Members away from the Floor of the House where all the action is.

No publicity or kudos is attached to being a member of a Committee that considers a private Bill. We all thrive on having approbation heaped upon us by our colleagues. No kudos is attached to doing good work by considering private Bills. If hon. Members knew that there was no need for the private Bill procedure and that the objectives of a Bill could be achieved by the promoters using other means, we should lose our temper if it became known that they were maximising their convenience while maximising the inconvenience of hon. Members, who are often forced to sit for many days on private Bill Committees. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will assure the House that London Regional Transport needs the private Bill procedure and that, if it does not, it has pursued all the other means of achieving what it wants to achieve, as set out in the Bill.

I refer also, in the context of the Bill and the report, to recommendation 14, which states:

"Each House should incorporate environmental impact assessment into private bill procedure by making new Standing Orders."

I have referred to the disruption in Victoria street. I do not know what the extent of the disruption will be. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will answer that question. We are interested in his answer because of the proximity of the Palace of Westminster to Victoria street.

An environmental impact assessment would have assisted the House if it had been presented with the Bill. We should have known that the promoters had done their work—that they had consulted residents in the Victoria street area and the local planning authority. The assessment would have assisted us to gauge the disruption that hon. Members are about to inflict on the people who use Victoria street—shoppers, business men and women, and those who use both public and private transport.

The report's recommendations are extremely useful. I have sat on various private Bill Committees and listened to the arguments both for and against the Bill. One can never be absolutely certain that one has reached the right decision. The role of those who sit on private Bill Committees is to listen to all the facts and to make the best decision they can in the light of all those facts. If they knew that an environmental impact assessment had been made, lengthy proceedings in Committee would be unnecessary. Committee members would be much happier if they knew that somebody had considered all the points that have to be borne in mind when major works are carried out which cause great disruption.

I reiterate that the House must have the earliest possible opportunity to discuss the report of the Joint Committee on Private Bill Procedure. It is a substantial report, which brings together the work of members of both Houses of Parliament over a long period. The Committee was asked to study the problem and to make recommendations in the light of criticism of the private Bill procedure. The Committee applied itself with enthusiasm to its task. It deserves something better from the business managers than that its report should sit around for about two years, the House never having been given an opportunity to vote on the recommendations. What is the point of asking Members of Parliament to sit on a Committee after a problem has been identified and then pigeonholing the Committee's report and not bothering to deal with the recommendations? It is discourteous to hon. Members to treat them in that way and it is not an efficient way to conduct our business.

[Mr. Tony Banks]

One could ask many questions about the Bill, and answers ought to be given to them. I should not have had to ask questions if the recommendations in the Joint Committee on Private Bill Procedure's report had been debated, agreed and implemented. All the recommendations may not have been implemented, but I am sure that the House would have been favourably inclined towards a number of them. They would have ensured that promoters such as London Regional Transport and British Rail did not come to the House to ask it to do things that would enable them to duck all the other planning requirements that other developers have to meet. We should not give favour to a private corporation or a public corporation unless we are absolutely certain that that organisation is not using Parliament as a way of ducking its public responsibility to those who will be most affected by the works proposed in the Bills that we have to consider, including this one.

I hope that the hon. Member for Ilford, South will be able to address some of the questions that I have raised. His young runner, the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes), has been going backwards and forwards most diligently passing him small pieces of paper, so I am sure that he is in a better position to answer my questions. I hope that he will give the House assurances, especially that the disruption in Victoria street will have minimal impact on the millions of Londoners who use that busy thoroughfare as pedestrians, drivers, passengers, shoppers or business people. How long will it take to complete the work? I hope that the hon. Gentleman will address those questions in his usual fair and frank fashion.

8 pm

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): I crave the indulgence of the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) and for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) for a few moments while I recite some of the essential features of the Bill. I assure the hon. Gentlemen that I will do my best to answer the questions that they have raised.

In terms of passengers starting and finishing their journeys, Victoria is the most heavily used station on the underground network. A total of 73 million passengers used the station in 1989 and approximately 270,000 people use it every day. That total comprises commuters, persons using Gatwick airport and tourists. During the morning peak 86 per cent. of passengers originate from the British Rail terminal. During the morning peak hour from 8.15 to 9.15, more than 33,000 people can be expected to pass through the underground station. During the evening peak hour that number rises to 35,000. During the morning peak hour 29 per cent. of the passengers use the Victoria line northbound; in the evening peak hour the pattern of movement generally represents a reversal of the morning peak, and the predominant flows are from the underground to British Rail, particularly from the Victoria line southbound and from the street to the underground. The main evening peak problems occur on the Victoria line exit from the southbound platform.

The main purpose of the powers sought in the Bill is to relieve congestion on the approaches to the platforms serving the Victoria line, especially the northbound platform. The congestion arises due to the fact that a large number of passengers wishing to travel on the Victoria line use the ticket hall and escalators which provide an interchange to Victoria mainline station. Those escalators descend to a concourse at low level containing short passageways leading to the platforms. The concourse is situated at the southern end of those platforms.

There is a tendency for passengers wishing to travel to Green Park and beyond to congregate around the southern end of that platform. Despite announcements asking them to move further along the platform, the accumulation of passengers is frequently such that it is necessary to close the station several times each morning peak until the platform is clear and safe to use again. The current situation is unacceptable from the customer's point of view and in relation to safety objectives. Therefore, in the short term, at the very least, positive action is needed to alleviate what must be one of the worst examples of station congestion on the underground network.

The short-term congestion relief package comprises an extended lower concourse to the main escalator from the Victoria line ticket hall, additional access to the platforms being provided by an extra cross-passage and an extended lower concourse to the interchange escalator with additional access to the Victoria line platforms with an extra cross-passage. The package also comprises an additional escalator in the existing District-Circle to Victoria line interchange escalator shaft, replacing the existing stairs. Perhaps more importantly, it is proposed to construct an additional subway between the eastbound District-Circle line platforms and the concourse at the head of the Victoria line interchange escalators.

When the works are constructed, passengers will have an alternative means of reaching the Victoria line by using the existing subway between the Victoria and District line ticket halls and proceeding to the Victoria line through the new subway. The entrance to the platform from that route is much further to the north on each of the Victoria line platforms. That will allow a much better distribution of passengers along the platform than at present.

The short-term works will reduce the frequency with which blocking back of passengers occurs at the southern end of the northbound platform and, in turn, station closures will be less frequent. The new relief subway will provide an evacuation route via the District-Circle line ticket hall which avoids the District-Circle line eastbound platform. In addition, in times of service disruption, the relief subway will ease the dangerous levels of congestion which can occur at the eastern end of the eastbound District-Circle line platform. That is why the promoters ask that the Bill be given a Second Reading.

The hon. Member for Tooting raised a number of important points regarding the underground network, particularly his concern about the Northern line. Many commuters will sympathise with his remarks because the Northern line has acquired a poor reputation. I have good news for the hon. Gentleman, however, in that no special Bill is required to improve the Northern line service. Signal alterations have reached the planning stage and I understand that new railway carriages are being constructed and that money has been allocated to improving facilities on the Northern line service.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the costs involved in the Bill. I know that they have increased since last year and are currently estimated at £6,100,000. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will agree that, in view of the importance of the measure for safety reasons, it is money well spent

and we cannot really allow the possibility of people being pushed on to the line. That is why the service has been disrupted so frequently by the entrances being closed, and that is why it is important that the work should proceed as quickly as possible.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West raised a number of points. He asked about ticket barriers, about the effect on Victoria street, and about the private Bill procedure. The hon. Gentleman will know as well as I do that I am in no position to answer the points that he raised about the private Bill procedure. That is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House and for Parliament.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the disruption to Victoria street. The works will cause obstructions outside Victoria underground station at the top of Victoria street, where there are four lanes of traffic. The work is likely to obstruct two of them for up to two years. That has been done in the past without too much difficulty, but clearly some congestion is inevitable in anticipation of the work to be carried out.

Mr. Tony Banks: The CBI estimates that congestion costs London about £7·5 billion per year. The proposed works will obviously add to that. Reducing the road width by half for up to two years will cause enormous traffic congestion, not only in Victoria street, around Buckingham Palace gate and down Vauxhall Bridge road, but all the way to Parliament square and probably down Whitehall to Trafalgar square. That will be an enormous imposition on this part of London. Is the hon. Gentleman wholly satisfied that everything possible has been done to minimise the disruption to London that these important works will cause?

Mr. Thorne: My information is that it is essential that that part of the roadway be used for this purpose. However, it should clearly be used for as short a period as possible and London Underground is conscious of that. The position is not quite so serious as the hon. Member for Newham, North-West suggests. There have been obstructions here in the past and the limiting factor is the traffic lights. On the best information available from the traffic engineers, the congestion should not be unduly great. There will not be the present completely free flow outside Victoria underground station, but the traffic flow will not be so disastrous as the hon. Member for Newham, North-West suggests.

Mr. Cox: The hon. Gentleman is frank in explaining to the House what he has been informed will be the problems. As my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) has said, the problems will be massive. I have two questions for the hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne). First, what consultation has there been with businesses in the area? Are they aware of what is about to happen to them? Secondly, what will the hours of work be? The hon. Member for Ilford, South has said that the work will take two years. The longer the working hours that can be put into the project each day, the shorter will be the overall time span. If the work will take two years, we must ensure—as is done on the continent and in other parts of the world—that there is round-the-clock working so that the work is done as quickly as possible.

Mr. Thorne: The usual notification has gone to the appropriate bodies, which would, of course, include the business community as a whole. The business community can object to the Bill when it is in Committee, if it so wishes. I take the point made by the hon. Member for Tooting about the length of working hours and I will write to him as it is an important point.

I also accept the point made by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West that it is time that we built into the cost of any project the cost of the disruption to London generally. We have put up with the disruption for far too long, so we should now take it into account and not dismiss it as a fact of life.

Mr. Tony Banks: I referred to the Horne report, which took that point on board. It suggested that an element of rental should be paid by developers for the amount of road they use when undertaking work. That would add to their costs, but it would encourage them to speed up the work, as my hon. Friend the Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) described, to minimise their own costs. At present, there is nothing to discipline builders and developers in London in relation to the disruption they cause because no great cost is charged to them for the congestion that they cause and the road space that they use.

Mr. Thorne: The hon. Gentleman makes a good point. The problem is to be able to assess accurately what the figures should be. Research is taking place, but it is not easy to lay down a general figure which would apply equally to all areas. However, I am aware that some developments cause unnecessary congestion. So long as residential occupiers are not disturbed—they want some rest at night and will be especially anxious that noisy work should not stray into the hours of darkness—the hon. Gentleman's suggestion is valuable. I understand that night-only work will be carried out on the platform. The rest of the work will take place around the clock.

I stress to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West that there is a need for the Bill. The House has laid it down that private Bills are required for railway works, especially where they trespass on land, whether under ground or on the surface. The construction of the tunnel undoubtedly trespasses on land. I commend this important safety measure to the House and I hope that the House will speed it on its way towards its Second Reading.

8.15 pm

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): All of us who use Victoria station, whether the main line or underground area, are aware of the considerable congestion for much of the day. We should support any measure to alleviate that congestion. However, I readily understand and sympathise with the views of my hon. Friend the Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) who pointed out, quite properly in view of the present scarce resources—unaccountably scarce for public transport—and given a Government whose enthusiasm for public transport expenditure is less than total, the failings of the Northern line among others, and how those failings affect his constituents. I hope that the reply from the hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) will go some way towards satisfying my hon. Friend that some action is being taken to deal with the delays on what is commonly called the "misery line" of the London underground.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) appears unaccountably to have flitted from his usual place. He caused some consternation earlier.

[Mr. Peter Snape]

When I arrived in the Chamber I found him sitting on the Government Front Bench. I thought that while I had been away for a couple of days the nation had come to its senses and had properly elected a Labour Government and that, predictably, and understandably, my hon. Friend was playing a prominent role in that Government as he is about to do again in this debate.

Mr. Tony Banks: When will the leader of our party come to his senses and elevate me to the Front Bench?

Mr. Snape: That had better be a matter for private consultation between my hon. Friend and my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock). If my hon. Friend feels that my personal endorsement would be of any great value, I assure him that I will relay the welcome and glad tidings to my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn as quickly as possible.

The hon. Member for Ilford, South, in his customarily thorough manner, described the intentions behind the Bill and the need for the works outlined in it. He mentioned the congestion caused, especially on the northbound platforms, as a result of passengers wishing to proceed to Green Park and beyond. If the works help to alleviate that sometimes dangerous congestion, they will be more than welcome.

There is also a problem for southbound passengers, which the hon. Member for Ilford, South did not mention. I do not expect an immediate reply, but I should be grateful if he would use his habitual contacts with London Underground management to see whether anything can be done about the problem. As a regular traveller on the Victoria line, it seems to me that more and more southbound trains are stopping in the tunnel outside Victoria station for up to two or three minutes. That is caused, no doubt, by trains in front crossing from one line to another to return to north London. The hon. Member for Ilford, South will be aware that many trains on the Victoria line terminate at Victoria station. Presumably, that is what is causing the hold-ups.

The build-up of passengers for Pimlico and beyond to Brixton which takes place on the southbound platform is considerably worsened by delays involving southbound trains having to be held for a considerable time before they reach the platform. That seems to be happening more and more frequently these days. Whether it is caused by the increasing number of passengers who use the Northern line, I do not know, but I should be grateful if the hon. Member for Ilford, South would find out about that, because regular travellers on the line would certainly appreciate a solution to the problem.

The Victoria line was opened as far back as 1968 and was regarded at the time as being in the forefront of underground railway technology. It is strange that we have not seen similar developments in other parts of London. New underground lines are expensive but so, too, are new roads and the present Government appear to regard the funding of new roads as a more palatable prospect than the funding of public transport, including the underground. I extend a belated welcome to the new Minister for Public Transport, and I hope that he will consider that argument.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West has miraculously reappeared yet again. He pointed out to the hon. Member for Ilford, South the likely costs of the congestion that will result while the work is taking place and suggested that if two lanes are closed around Victoria station the tailback of traffic is likely to reach Parliament square. I think that I can set my hon. Friend's mind at rest because if the Jubilee line is extended as promised we shall not have to worry about congestion in Parliament square because for a couple of years it will be a building site anyway. I can well understand my hon. Friend's anxiety about the prospects of any of us getting in or out of the Palace while the work is taking place.

Mr. Tony Banks: I do not see how we can possibly avoid major congestion around Victoria station and down Victoria street as a result of the works. I know that my hon. Friend will not necessarily be able to answer this question, but I hope that when he is Minister for Public Transport or Chief Whip, whichever post he is trying for today, he will ensure that if such works take place there will be close co-ordination between the developer—in this case, London Underground—the police, the traffic warden service and the local authority. Unless all parking meters in the area are to be suspended for the duration of the work and illegal parking descended upon with all the ferocity that Plod can muster, an awful lot of additional problems will arise. What does my hon. Friend think about that?

Mr. Snape: That is a very good idea. Whatever lies ahead in my career, I know that my hon. Friend will agree with me that the reinstatement of a strategic transport authority for London would take care of a great many of the problems that he has outlined. The lack of co-ordination between the various organisations has arisen directly from the abolition of the GLC and from the fact that the different organisations have no central planning procedures to bring their work together. My hon. Friend may well be Minister for London in some future Labour Government—we shall then have the enormous pleasure of listening to him speak from the Dispatch Box and explain away any difficulties that may occur even under the aegis of the thorough and detailed planning body that he, as Minister, will head.

I welcome the proposals, and I hope that the congestion which will result from their implementation will be minimised.

8.25 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): I shall be extremely brief in commending the Bill on the Government's behalf. I congratulate my hon. Friends the Members for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) and for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) on their support for the Bill and the hard work that they have put in to its preparation.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) referred to the Horne report. The Government support the recommendations in that report and look forward to its early implementation. The hon. Gentleman also asked about congestion in Victoria street, and I shall pursue that matter with representatives of London Regional Transport next time I meet them. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South will also do that, but I shall certainly ask about the length of time and the degree of congestion involved.

The hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) asked about the Northern line. As he probably knows, a major modernisation of the Northern line is included in the programme. That will follow the modernisation of the Central line, which will cost more than £700 million. I plan to visit the Northern line and, following the hon. Gentleman's remarks, I shall certainly go down to the south of that line. I intend to visit the Angel, where a major programme of modernisation is in hand.

Mr. Cox: I welcome the Minister's assurance that finance will be made available for the modernisation of the Northern line. I hope that he will visit the line during the rush hour, rather than during the late morning or early afternoon. Unless he goes then, he will get no feel for the enormous problems that commuters who use that line have to endure daily.

Let me take the hon. Gentleman back to his point about congestion. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) talked about a tailback from Victoria station to Parliament square and beyond to Whitehall. That may well happen, and the Minister must be aware of the area to which we are referring and of the enormous amount of traffic that comes over Vauxhall bridge and makes its way around the Victoria area. We are talking about congestion not just along Victoria street and in Parliament square and Whitehall. The whole area is already enormously congested not only during the rush hour but throughout the day. I beg the Minister to take the point that my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West made. We are talking not just about one area but about several major routes to various parts of London which will be seriously affected.

I close by saying—*[Laughter.]* Hon. Members may laugh: if they represented areas such as mine, they would realise that it is no good saying in six months or a year, "We never thought that the work would cause so much congestion." We know that there is already congestion and the Government should do as my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West suggested: they should get their act together and reduce the congestion as much as possible.

Mr. Freeman: As I said, I will visit the Northern line, and I shall certainly do so during the rush hour, as that is the right time to see it at work.

Mr. Tony Banks: As the Minister is here, I should like to put in a bid. At some stage during his ministerial odyssey round the various stations of London, will the ministerial loins find themselves at Stratford station?

Mr. Freeman: The hon. Gentleman must have forgotten our debate on Friday, when I said that I would visit Stratford. That and my commitment to visit the Northern line are the only two commitments that I have given at the Dispatch Box, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman is satisfied.

The Government take seriously the congestion on the underground—not only on the Northern line. That is why London Regional Transport has an investment programme of £1·7 billion over the next three years, which will bring relief, not only to Victoria but to the Northern line. I commend the Bill to the House.

8.29 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I apologise for not being in the Chamber for most of the debate. I did not realise that we would reach this stage of our proceedings so quickly. Indeed, there was appalling congestion en route.

I have previously objected to the Second Reading of this Bill. I tabled a blocking motion which, after discussions with London Underground Limited, I withdrew. I share the concerns of my colleagues about the congestion in Victoria street and the surrounding areas as the building work progresses. The reason for my blocking motion and why I had discussions with London Underground Limited was that I was concerned about access for the disabled on to the Victoria line and other lines in London.

I understand that London Underground has an informal policy of permitting wheelchairs and prams on the sub-surface lines, the lines that run in shallow tunnels such as the Metropolitan line, Circle line, District line and Central line. However, wheelchairs and prams are discouraged on the deep-bore lines. That policy cannot be enforced because if someone wants to carry a pram or pushchair down to a deep line, he can do so. However, London Underground discourages that strongly.

In London as a whole the transport facilities for the disabled are not good. The changes in the dial-a-ride system have made it very difficult for people to get around and few buses are designed to make easier transport for people with disabilities. The Careline system is limited and covers only certain areas. Therefore, many disabled people use the underground system, and they find that very difficult.

I want to ensure that, as Victoria station is revamped and its interchanges altered, there are proper facilities for people with disabilities of all sorts—not just people in wheelchairs, but people with hearing difficulties or sight problems. They should be able to get around the station more easily than they can at the moment. Most of the London underground network is not geared to meeting the needs of the disabled. Disabled people are often placed in danger because of the crush and the crowds.

I hope that either the sponsor of the Bill or the Minister, if he is fortunate enough to catch your eye again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will respond to my points. Although the Bill is limited in that it deals only with the changes to Victoria station, there is a case for considering the transport problems facing the disabled around London and on the underground network as a whole.

London Underground Limited frequently presents Bills to the House promoting changes to the network. Indeed, a Bill on the Hackney to Victoria line will be presented to the House some time in the future. Unless we have clear assurances from London Regional Transport about its policy towards passengers with disabilities, we may feel minded to delay or obstruct those Bills until we get the assurances. Why should transport around London be made more difficult for the disabled than it already is?

8.34 pm

Mr. Thorne: With the leave of the House, I will reply to hon. Members' comments. I have taken note of the points raised by the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr.

[Mr. Thorne]

Snape) about the problems with the lines that go into Victoria. I will investigate that and write to him, as he suggested.

The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) referred to the disabled. We are becoming more aware of the need to provide adequate facilities for the disabled in buildings and on transport. London Regional Transport is aware of that concern. The hon. Member for Islington, North will be aware of the amount of work that has been carried out on the docklands light railway to ensure that every possible consideration is taken, and provision made, for the disabled. Obviously it is a little more difficult to make provisions for the disabled in existing stations and on existing concourses where facilities are being renewed and changed. However, wherever that can possibly be done, it is being done.

Mr. Corbyn: I accept the point about the docklands light railway where the facilities for the disabled are better than anywhere else. Clearly a lot of thought has gone into that, and I welcome it.

I use the Victoria line every day when I travel from Finsbury Park to Victoria and then on to Westminster. With the changes at Victoria station, I hope that there will be escalator connections to the Victoria line from all the lines that enter the station. There is not a complete escalator connection for some lines at Victoria. For example, if one changes platforms from the District and Circle lines to the Victoria line, or vice versa, half the descent is made via an escalator—when it is working and frequently it is not—and the other half is made on a rather steep extremely busy curving staircase. Someone with a walking problem or a disabled person in a wheelchair would have enormous difficulty changing platforms in that way.

Disability could happen to any of us tomorrow, and we should consider the matter more carefully. I hope that London Underground Limited will do that and will consider that transport should not simply be for the ambulant.

Mr. Thorne: I accept the hon. Gentleman's point. We must be very careful and give every possible consideration to the disabled. We should include facilities for them wherever possible.

I said earlier that one of the proposals for the present scheme at Victoria is to remove one of the staircases and to install an additional escalator. Hopefully that will obviate some of the inconveniences caused by breakdowns that occur from time to time. With more escalators, not all of them are likely to be out of action at the same time.

The hon. Member for Islington, North made a very good point about providing escalator transport from all levels. I cannot give him an assurance about that at the moment. We are talking about essential improvements to Victoria from a safety point of view because of the danger of people being pushed on to the line. The hon. Gentleman has made his point well and I will ask LRT to consider the matter urgently to make the kind of alterations that he has requested as quickly as possible.

Mr. Corbyn: I have taken this matter very seriously, and I spent a morning at Victoria station observing the safety of passengers through the television monitors. I witnessed the difficulties facing passengers and the need to control the flow of people on to platforms. I should be grateful if the hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) would ask the promoters and the developers to consider the steepness of staircases, their width and also better signing on them. They must be aware of the problems facing a slow walker, perhaps with a walking frame or a stick who might be crushed from behind or slow up the flow of people on narrow staircases.

Mr. Thorne: I will ensure that that point is considered over the next few weeks. I hope that the House will give the Bill a unanimous Second Reading.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a Second time and referred to the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills.

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING BILL *[LORDS]* [MONEY]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Town and Country Planning Bill *[Lords]*, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any increase by or under that Act in the sums payable; and

(b) any increase attributable to that Act in the sums so payable under any other enactment.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

PLANNING (LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS) BILL *[LORDS]* [MONEY]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Planning, (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Bill *[Lords]*, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any increase by or under that Act in the sums so payable.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

Orders of the Day

Town and Country Planning Bill *[Lords]*

Considered in Committee.

8.40 pm

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Sir Paul Dean): As this is a consolidation measure, if the Committee agrees, in the normal way I shall put the clauses en bloc until we get to the amendments.

Clauses 1 to 170 agreed to.

Clause 171

GENERAL INTERPRETATION OF CHAPTER II

The Solicitor-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 115, line 46, leave out 'I' and insert 'II'.

This amendment creates a reference to compensation under part II of the Land Compensation Act 1961, substituting "II" for "I".

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 171, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 172 to 318 agreed to.

Clause 319

APPLICATION OF ACT TO ISLES OF SCILLY

The Solicitor-General: I beg to move amendment No. 2, in page 215, line 34, leave out '102(5)' and insert '102(8)'.

This is a minor drafting amendment.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West) *rose*——

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means: Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that we are dealing with a consolidation measure, so that any remarks must be very restricted.

Mr. Banks: Indeed, they will be, Sir. I shall attempt to consolidate my remarks into the shortest possible amount of time and space.

I want the Solicitor-General to explain in a little more detail. I am not doing this to be awkward at this early point in the evening; I am doing it because it follows on from the previous debate. We need to know a little more. The Committee is being asked to agree something. I am sure that the Solicitor-General would not try to work a flanker on us—he does not look like that sort of person. He is the sort of chap whom one would be quite prepared to have defending one in the courts, or whatever else he does when he is not here. I should like him to explain precisely what the amendment means so that I shall know that, at some later time, no hon. Member will be brought to account for having made some terrible mistake at 8.41 pm in a sparsely attended Chamber. That would colour my whole attitude to the remainder of the Bill.

The Solicitor-General: In clause 319 there is a reference to clause 102(5), which should be a reference to clause 102(8). I hope that that elucidates the matter for the hon. Member.

Mr. Banks: How did that error occur? It is quite clear that it was sloppy draftsmanship—or draftspersonship, I should say. The Committee should not pass a matter like this willy-nilly without making a comment. How does it happen? Is the Solicitor-General in charge of his Department? Does he know what is going on? Why did he let that happen? Why did it slip through the net? Surely, with all his civil servants buzzing around getting him cups of tea and tending to his every whim, something like this should never have been allowed to occur. It is a matter for resignation.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 319, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 320 to 336, agreed to.

Mr. Tony Banks: On a point of order, Sir Paul. We have just agreed many clauses. Would it be possible for the clauses to be called out clause by clause? Is it possible to vote clause by clause?

The First Deputy Chairman: It would be possible. Whether it would be popular with the Committee is a different matter. I am following the customary procedure with consolidation Bills, which is to put blocks of clauses and schedules together, but if the hon. Gentleman feels at any time during our proceedings——

Mr. Banks: No; I just want to know.

The First Deputy Chairman: The hon. Gentleman appears to be satisfied.

Clause 337

SHORT TITLE, COMMENCEMENT AND EXTENT

8.45 pm

The Solicitor-General: I beg to move amendment No. 3, in page 230, leave out lines 36 to 39.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) will understand when I say that this amendment would remove the privilege amendment moved in another place.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): This Bill has been rushed through. Some hon. Members expected more time to prepare. *[Interruption.]* Indeed, I did not even have time to dress for dinner this evening; I was forced to appear like this.

The amendment would remove the provision

"(4) Nothing in this Act shall impose any charge on the people or on public funds, or vary the amount or incidence of or otherwise alter any such charge in any manner, or affect the assessment, levying, administration or application of any money raised by any such charge."

Those words are important to the Bill. I ask the Solicitor-General seriously to answer my question.

There is much in planning legislation that requires public expenditure. There is also much in planning legislation that is rechargeable to applicants. I have some knowledge of planning legislation as a former chair of a borough planning committee, so I have looked into the details of the matter. I was also the chair of the London Labour party committee that drew up the planning policy for the Greater London council.

Mr. Tony Banks: If my hon. Friend can chair that, he can chair anything.

Mr. Corbyn: As my hon. Friend says, if one can chair that, one can chair anything.

Is an informal subsidy being proposed through not fully charging planning applicants, particularly when major developments are involved, or is the matter to do with the enforcement of planning restrictions? I give an example that is very pertinent and of great concern in my constituency.

We have advertising hoardings all around London. Some of them are put up legally—some of them have planning permission. Some have historical planning permission in that they existed as advertising sites before the Town and Country Planning Act 1947. There is also in London a big business whereby people are making a great deal of money by putting up illegal advertising hoardings. Companies exist solely to go around fly-posting advertisements for pop concerts, holidays, loan sharks, bits of merchandise and so on. It is big business. Those hoarding companies operate an illegal trade in that they are illegally fly-posting or illegally advertising across London. It falls within the purview of planning law to exercise control over the disfigurement of our streets.

Some parts of London are very beautiful. Some parts of London are made unnecessarily ugly by the imposition of unauthorised fly-posting and advertising. For example, I drove along Kingsland road the other day. Potentially it is a very beautiful road. It is a broad street with nicely proportioned buildings on either side. It has been absolutely ruined by hoardings. Some of them are legal, but a large number of them are illegal. The area I live in in Finsbury Park is plagued by such hoardings. In many parts of London—I hesitate to say in the poorer working class areas of London—there is disfigurement of our environment by such hoardings.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. I must remind the hon. Gentleman that we are dealing with a consolidation measure. I have allowed him to develop some of his arguments, but he must now come to the main point, which is whether the law should be consolidated.

Mr. Corbyn: The amendment states:

"Clause 337, page 230, leave out lines 36 to 39."

I read out clause 337(4) for the convenience of hon. Members who may not have a copy of the Bill or the amendment in front of them. The amendment would leave out the guarantee in the existing town and country planning legislation that

"Nothing in this Act shall impose any charge"—

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman is misinformed. We are discussing a purely technical device.

Mr. Corbyn: I understand that. I do not want to create any problems for you, Sir Paul, or for the Solicitor-General. I am sure that he is well briefed, although the Civil Service Box appears to be empty apart from one person. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) assures me that there is one person in the Box.

We are told that there will be no charge on public funds through removing a piece of legislation. What is behind what is being done? Will a massive bill descend on local authorities or even on central Government? I am endeavouring to raise a matter of great concern to me, which is illegal fly-posting in London and the disfigurement of the capital by unauthorised and illegal hoardings. Can they be removed and, if so, would that become a charge on public funds?

The Solicitor-General: If the hon. Member took a closer interest in planning matters and parliamentary procedure, he would appreciate that the provision which we are removing was inserted to prevent the Bill from being a money Bill in the House of Lords. It has nothing to do with fly-posting.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 337, as amended, agreed to.

Schedules 1 to 15 agreed to.

Schedule 16

PROVISIONS OF THE PLANNING ACTS REFERRED TO IN SECTIONS 314 TO 319

Amendment made: No. 4, in page 310, line 24, leave out '(5)' and insert '(8)'.—*[The Solicitor-General.]*

Schedule 16, as amended, agreed to.

Schedule 17 agreed to.

Bill reported, with amendments; as amended, considered.

Order for Third Reading read.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

8.52 pm

Mr. Tony Banks: I am attempting gently to demonstrate that much of our legislation goes through in this fashion, virtually on the nod. As I make that statement I see the Government Whip, the hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), shaking his head in dissent. He shakes his head and he is welcome to it. I would not want to be seen wearing it.

There are a number of points in the Bill that are worthy of consideration. I put it to the Solicitor-General that this is not a satisfactory way of dealing with the Bill, even though it is a consolidation measure. It should not pass without any attempt being made to raise some issues. He was at one point courting disaster by treating the points that we raised in an offhand and laid back fashion, although that seems to be the style in his Department.

I remind him that, had we persisted, we could have been voting all through the night on the amendments that were before the Committee. I hope that he will remember that when he brushes us aside, as he will, no doubt, do again in the future. He must also remember that there is infinite possibility for retribution to be heaped upon his balding pate by irate Back-Benchers who may feel that they have not been treated with the courtesy and seriousness that their points warrant.

8.54 pm

Mr. Corbyn: I raised in Committee some points of concern to me arising out of this legislation and the answers I received were unhelpful. I was told that a provision was being deleted to facilitate ease of passage for the measure through the House of Lords. That was not a satisfactory answer to a legitimate question and——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. We have dealt with the Committee stage. We are now on Third Reading and the hon. Member must address his remarks

to that. I repeat that we are dealing with a consolidation measure. The only question in order on a Bill such as this is whether consolidation should or should not take place.

Mr. Corbyn: I am not happy that consolidation should take place, for the reasons I outlined in Committee. I fear that the Bill may incur a greater charge on the public purse in the long run. I wish that I were able to debate many aspects of the Bill, because we in this country do not have a particularly democratic planning system. Under our system, local authorities consult on a planning application, make a decision—appropriate or otherwise, based on that local consultation—and then the power to impose that decision is taken from them either by the process of calling in by the Secretary of State, referred to in clause 44 of the Bill, or by the applicant, a developer——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I fear that the hon. Member is not taking notice of the advice that I have been giving him. He is now attempting to discuss the merits. That is an abuse of our procedures when we are dealing with a consolidation measure. He must bring himself in order, otherwise I shall be obliged to ask him to resume his seat.

Mr. Corbyn: I am in some difficulty because I wanted to talk about the lack of democracy in our planning procedures. You are telling me, correctly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that because this is a consolidation measure, only narrow issues may be raised. That being so, may I ask you to advise me of the matters that can be raised, remembering that I have serious concerns to express about planning procedures and the effect they are having, with wealthy developers trying to destroy part of my constituency?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I cannot advise the hon. Member more than I have done already.

Mr. Corbyn: I hope that when the Solicitor-General replies he will bear in mind the remarks I made about many people's anxieties about the need for proper consultation and the right of local authorities and local people to have a real say in planning decisions, rather than those decisions being made over their heads by a cabal involving powerful commercial interests lobbying for their planning proposals, and the Secretary of State overriding the decisions made, after careful consideration, by local authorities.

8.58 pm

The Solicitor-General: I hope that the hon. Members for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) will acquit me of discourtesy if I gave short but accurate answers to their technical questions on highly technical amendments.

What we are debating is a process of immensely careful consolidation which, if the hon. Member for Newham, North-West had had the time—I am sure that he will wish to take the time later tonight—to study, he would have realised that, in preparing the consolidation, the House had had the benefit of a report from the Law Commission which contained a number of recommendations of a minor and clarificatory nature for amending the existing legislation.

Those amendments appear in the Bills. We are dealing with four Bills tonight, all of which were referred in the usual way to the Joint Committee on Consolidation Bills &c. during their passage through another place. The Committee reported that the recommendations of the Law Commission were necessary and produced a satisfactory consolidation of the law. The four Bills, taken together, amount to a single consolidation.

The hon. Members for Newham, North-West and for Islington, North have said that many aspects of planning deserve discussion in the House. However you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have explained that we are not permitted to go into the merits or wider aspects of consolidation measures. I am sure that the House will agree that we owe a great debt of gratitude to the parliamentary draftsmen and to all those who have played their part in the earlier stages of the Bill's passage, and in the Committees of this House and another place, in helping to get this measure right.

Mr. Corbyn *rose*——

The Solicitor-General: I shall give way briefly to the hon. Gentleman as a matter of courtesy, but then I shall conclude.

Mr. Corbyn: Now that the Solicitor-General has explained the derivation of the Bill—I understand that it is a consolidation measure and incorporates many other pieces of legislation—surely he is aware that there is much concern about the balance of power in planning matters and planning decisions. Is this Bill to form a definitive town and country planning Act for a long time to come, or do the Government have something in mind to address the real and rapidly growing concerns of people throughout the country about the way in which planning decisions are made, often irrespective of the wishes of small local communities, and these days much more in favour of big commercial interests? I am sure that many hon. Members of all parties echo that legitimate concern.

The Solicitor-General: I know that the hon. Gentleman will be glad to know that the proper carrying out of planning procedures is very much in the Government's mind. Although one must not anticipate future legislative programmes, this matter may turn out to be more in mind than the hon. Gentleman realises.

If the hon. Gentleman had been here for earlier debates, or if he were to look at the statute book, he would realise that all the Acts that are now being consolidated have been given time to pass through both Houses during Conservative Administrations, although they span a period going back to 1971, which covers some Labour Administrations. Town and country planning is extremely important, and I am glad that legislation relating to it is being given the time for consolidation now——

Mr. Corbyn: What about the Town and Country Planning Act 1947?

The Solicitor-General: The hon. Gentleman is right to mention the 1947 Act, but that is not one of the Acts that is being consolidated today.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Bill read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Bill *[Lords]*

Considered in Committee.

9.1 pm

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Sir Paul Dean): The Committee will realise that this is a consolidation Bill also. Therefore, with the agreement of the Committee, I propose to put the clauses en bloc until we come to the Government amendments.

Clauses 1 to 12 agreed to.

Clause 13

DUTY TO NOTIFY SECRETARY OF STATE OF APPLICATIONS

The Solicitor-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): I beg to move amendment No. 2, in page 9, line 1, at beginning insert 'If'.

The First Deputy Chairman: With this it will be convenient to consider Government amendments Nos. 3 and 4.

The Solicitor-General: These are drafting amendments. Amendment No. 2 would insert the word "If"; amendment No. 3 would leave out the word "and" and would insert the word "or"; and amendment No. 4 would make a rather more substantial change and remove the word "shall" and insert the words

"intend to grant listed building consent they shall first".

All the amendments relate to the duties of a local planning authority to which an application may be made for listed building consent.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 3, in page 9, line 2, leave out 'and' and insert 'or'.

No. 4, in page 9, line 4, leave out 'shall' and insert 'intend to grant listed building consent they shall first'.—*[The Solicitor-General.]*

Clause 13, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 14 to 93, agreed to.

Clause 94

SHORT TITLE, COMMENCEMENT AND EXTENT

The Solicitor-General: I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 57, leave out lines 41 to 44.

This amendment would remove the privilege amendment that was necessary to prevent the Bill from being a money Bill in another place.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 94, as amended, agreed to.

Schedules 1 to 4 agreed to.

Bill reported, with amendments; as amended, considered.

Order for Third Reading read.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

9.4 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Can the Solicitor-General explain why it is necessary to insert the provision that makes the Bill a money Bill before it goes from this House to another place? Why is it then necessary for us to remove that clause? This is a serious question: the more that people see of our procedures, the more questions they ask about them. To hon. Members, what is going on this evening may be wholly explicable—although I am not sure that that can be said for all of us. However, we should bear in mind that, now that the television cameras have been introduced and our procedures have become more accessible, those who may stumble across this incident on their television screens would appreciate a further explanation from the Solicitor-General. Perhaps he will use his well-trained and expensive legal brain to provide a few words of elucidation.

9.6 pm

The Solicitor-General: There is a well-known saying that legal advice is worth exactly what one pays for it. The hon. Gentleman has raised a point of some constitutional importance. As he will know, the other place can play only a limited part in a money Bill. If it is to play a full and valuable part in such legislation, it is necessary for the Bill not to be a money Bill. Therefore, to achieve that theoretical position, it is customary in another place to put in an amendment that says that nothing in an Act should impose any charge on the people or on public funds, thereby preventing it from being a money Bill. However, as the Bill may have that effect, when it returns to this House the clause is taken out. That is a constitutional device that enables the other place to play its important role as a revising Chamber that scrutinises legislation—something of which Conservative Members strongly approve.

Given that the Labour policy review is now under consideration, it is timely to note that the Labour party proposes to abolish the other place as we know it, and to put in its place a limited elected assembly with greatly truncated powers. Whether those constitutional arrangements would find favour in the country is uncertain, but at present the other place has an important constitutional role, and that is why the clause has been inserted; however, we take it out so that the constitutional proprieties are not infringed.

9.8 pm

Mr. Corbyn: That is an interesting reply. As I understood it, the Solicitor-General was saying that the Parliament Act 1911, which was passed after the people's Budget had been knocked back by the House of Lords—even though the powers of the House of Lords had been reduced following the 1910 election—is in effect circumvented by this device. It seems that one minute it is a money Bill, and the next minute it is not. We are saying that there may be an unqualified charge on public funds through this legislation, although the House of Lords was told that there would be no charge. That is the only way that the other place could have discussed it.

I should be grateful if you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would consider the propriety of that device. I realise that it is a device that is regularly used by the Government, but it seriously undermines the principle of legislation enshrined in the Parliament Act 1911.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

Planning (Hazardous Substances) Bill *[Lords]*

Considered in Committee.

[SIR PAUL DEAN *in the Chair*]

Clauses 1 to 41 agreed to.
Schedule agreed to.
Bill reported, without amendment.
Order for Third Reading read.
Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

9.11 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I think that you were present during the Committee stage of the Bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I did not seek to intervene in that process. I realise that the Bill is a consolidation and, therefore, narrow measure. We must be narrow in our remarks. That is a great shame in view of the deep anxiety of many people about the transport of hazardous wastes by road, rail, through the channel tunnel or in other ways, and the pollution caused, such as the pollution of the Devon beaches.

I wonder whether the Solicitor-General, who is clearly privy to all that is going on at the centre of the Government, can inform the House when there will be a new piece of legislation to give greater protection to our environment and our population from the dangers——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. We must deal with this Bill. It is not in order to invite Mr. Solicitor-General to comment on another Bill that may or may not be introduced.

Mr. Corbyn: I appreciate your advice, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Perhaps I could put it another way through you. When the Solicitor-General replies to this, probably short debate—although other hon. Members may wish to speak—perhaps he could tell the House whether he is entirely satisfied with the existing forms of protection for the general population and our environment and the protection in the Bill in the matter of the transport and disposal of hazardous wastes.

The Solicitor-General must be aware that there is deep anxiety throughout the country on that matter.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. As skilful as Mr. Solicitor-General is, he would find it difficult to comment on that and remain within the rules of order.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): You do me almost more honour than I deserve, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The only point that I wish to make—I doubt that I shall remain within the rules of order in making it—is that the Government have taken particular care of the environment. I commend to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) the White Paper that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is likely to produce later this year.

Question put and agreed to.
Bill read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

Planning (Consequential Provisions) Bill *[Lords]*

Considered in Committee.
[SIR PAUL DEAN *in the Chair.*]
Clauses 1 to 7 agreed to.
Schedules 1 to 4 agreed to.
Bill reported, without amendment.
Order for Third Reading read.

9.15 pm

The Solicitor-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

Since this is a strange procedure that must be extremely odd to anyone watching on television or to anyone else not familiar with our proceedings, it is right to explain that we have now consolidated four Bills and brought into a modern and accessible form the general law on town and country planning and related matters. We want to express our thanks to the Law Commission and to the draftsmen for their excellent work in helping us to bring about that change.

9.16 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is, as usual, a serious point of order.

Normally, when speaking in the Chamber it is not in order to refer to people sitting in the Strangers' Gallery. Any reference to them is specifically out of order. In the past few months, however, there has been a growing practice for hon. Members to refer to the effect that their speech or someone else's speech will have on television viewers. If it is not in order to refer to people sitting in the Galleries—in constitutional terms they are referred to as "Strangers"—logically it should also be out of order to refer to television cameras, television audiences or programmes. Such references are an intrusive influence on the running of the Chamber.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): The hon. Gentleman has raised an interesting point. He might like to ask the Select Committee on Televising of Proceedings of the House to consider it.

Question put and agreed to.
Bill read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

Educational Initiatives (Government Funding)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

9.17 pm

Mr. Chris Butler (Warrington, South): Something extraordinary is happening in the tiny village of Moore near Warrington, something unique in the United Kingdom. Something has been created by children aged four and upwards which displays so much creativity that the whole business has burst on to the international scene and has gained recognition in countries as far apart as Norway, Japan and even the Lofoten islands. That something is "In Our Own Words", a magazine started in one small school.

The magazine is written, designed, laid out and edited almost exclusively by the children. It began as a school project in the constituency of the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle), and he may try to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to discuss the origins of the project. In five years the circulation of that magazine has grown from 1,600 copies, produced by six schools, to a total production last year of 300,000 copies with contributions from 1,000 schools.

The driving force behind the project is a school teacher by the name of Frank Melling. If enthusiasm and commitment were enough, the project would not be facing any problems. But it faces the problem of funding, which is on a shoestring. The project reflects great credit on Cheshire and Cheshire schools. I try to be as objective as I can about an authority of a different political nature to myself, but I find it hard to give the authority great credit for the attitude taken by its officials to the project, particularly when the county increased its precept by £82 million in the last year alone. Apparently officials in the county are planning to reduce the payment to Mr. Melling so that it covers only 60 per cent. of his salary, quite apart from the expenses that he has in introducing the magazine. In the following year, the threat is that he may get no salary at all. I understand that elected members of all political parties may be taking a more sensitive view of the project, particularly in the light of the Adjournment debate. We shall see whether it produces the result that we would all like.

Mr. Melling has with great ingenuity exploited many sources of plural funding. As co-author with me just before the last election of a Conservative Political Centre booklet, "The Arts—the Next Move Forward" my hon. Friend the Minister, with whom I spent many hours of lucubration, will recognise the importance of plural funding. Mr. Melling has been successful in getting sponsorship from private companies such as Canon, which provides copying machines, BNFL and others. Unfortunately, it is not enough. As my hon. Friend knows, private sponsorship is obtained much more easily if private sponsors believe that official sponsorship is at the right level and that sponsorship is not being left entirely to private companies.

Unfortunately, the level of official sponsorship which we would all like to see is lacking. Mr. Melling applied to the Department of Trade and Industry for help, but it was denied on the basis that the project was art and had nothing to do with industry. So he went to the regional arts authority, North-West Arts, which thought that the project was very good but denied him sponsorship because it did not regard the project as art—or at any rate thought that it might be literature and thus not worthy of support. As a consequence, Mr. Melling cannot get help from the Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts. To qualify for that scheme, a project has to be recognised as art.

Mr. Melling approached the Department of Education and Science, which thought that it was a good scheme but denied it support and recommended that he go to North-West Arts, where he had already been. The Department also recommended that Cheshire might apply for section 28 funding. I gather that the project already receives an element of such support in terms of supply teachers. That support is not suitable for direct funding.

I ask my hon. Friend to reconsider some pump-priming support from the DES. The project is talking the Government's own language, and it is cultivating excellence in the arts. I do believe that literature is an art form. The project is based on self-help and on a partnership with industry. It is developing vocational skills and it is raising standards throughout the whole school community. In addition, it is within the spirit and the letter of the national curriculum at every key stage that I can identify. It has a remarkable fit with a number of the requirements of the national curriculum.

"English in the national curriculum—No. 2", which was issued in March, refers to key stage 4. It states:

> "Pupils should have opportunities to write in a wider range of forms including . . . newspaper articles . . . consider features of layout e.g. headings, side headings, the use of columns of indentations etc."

In the section on standards of attainment at level 6 it talks of the importance of pupils being involved with computer printouts, computer graphics and desk-top publishing. At level 8 there is a reference to the necessity for children to produce additional columns for a broad sheet newspaper and a tabloid. The project is fully in tune with the most modern and exciting developments in education today. It encourages and promotes the use of English, not only nationally but internationally. It deserves and needs official recognition so that it can flourish and grow.

To be fair to officials and Ministries, they seem to appreciate the value and creativity involved in the project. However, because of its formulation it seems to be falling between all stools so that it is all too easy for officials to claim that, much as they like it, it is not their ministerial responsibility but some other Ministry's responsibility. I hope that my hon. Friend will adopt the project and bring it in from the cold.

9.22 pm

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): I am deeply indebted to the hon. Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler) for allowing me a few minutes of his Adjournment debate. He has done so because, while the project is now in his constituency, it started in mine at Bewsey high school in 1985, albeit in a modest way, and its popularity has grown.

I echo what the hon. Gentleman said about the project director, Mr. Frank Melling, and would extend that to the staff who work on the project with such enthusiasm. Not only was the project successful from its small beginning in Bewsey, and moved to a school in the hon. Gentleman's

constituency—it spread throughout Cheshire and, indeed, throughout the country. It also spread internationally to Brussels, and is now spreading overseas to the developing world. I think that the Minister would agree that a project of this nature which has spread in that way is vital. It is also important for the future prosperity of this country that English is spoken by those in the developing world.

I have three letters which were written to Frank Melling. The first is from Croydon. It talks about the direct results and involvement, and asks for advice. The second is from Humberside county council, and the third is from Strathclyde. The three letters show the national appeal of the project.

The project also has an international appeal. The hon. Member for Warrington, South and I had the pleasure earlier this year of entertaining school children here who had come from Brussels. It also appeals to the European Community.

I shall read what has been said by the deputy editor of "British Overseas Development", Amanda Hewett, when writing to Mr. Frank Melling, project director of the now well-known magazine, "In Our Own Words". Her letter states:

"Dear Mr. Melling,

Further to your recent correspondence with Mr. David Marder, Editor of British Overseas Development, I am writing to introduce myself and express my interest in your highly innovative project.

Having only recently entered the post of Editor of the Schools section of BOD, I am keen to make contact with students in schools and other centres of education, with a view to improving the dialogue between us and sharing ideas. With this in mind, I should welcome feedback from the 'In Our Own Words' participants themselves".

The letter continues, showing British Overseas Development's interest in the magazine.

As the hon. Gentleman said, the magazine is helped and financed by Cheshire county council. It is also helped by businesses, which see the project as being educationally useful. We need national backing from the Department of Education and Science. That is essential. The Minister has given up his time to come to the House tonight to reply to the Adjournment debate. If he could look at ways and means of helping to finance the project nationally, it would help to solve the magazine's difficult financial situation and enable Mr. Melling and his dedicated staff to appeal not only nationally to schools and internationally in the EC but overseas to the developing world with the full backing of the Secretary of State for Education and Science. I hope that the Minister will be able to find a way for us.

9.30 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Alan Howarth): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler) for giving such a full and lucid account of the work being done by the Cheshire schools magazine project. He has evidently taken a great personal interest in the development of the project's newspaper, "In Our Own Words", and is an eloquent and enthusiastic campaigner on its behalf. He is to be congratulated on securing the debate.

I have listened with great interest to what he and the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) have had to say. I was already aware of the project through correspondence that we have had with other hon. Members and between officials and the director, but it has been helpful to be brought more fully into the picture. It is clear to me from all that I have seen and heard that the development of the newspaper has been carried out with verve and imagination, and I add my congratulations to those already offered to Mr. Frank Melling.

The copies of "In Our Own Words" that I have seen were extremely interesting, well presented and professionally produced. The director of the project must be delighted with the newspaper's steady increase in circulation and with the contact that he has established with schools in other areas and in other countries. I applaud his efforts and those of all the pupils who have contributed in whatever way to the newspaper. I hope that others will be inspired by their example.

The Government are interested in such initiatives and would like to see more of them spring up around the country, as already seems to be happening. There is much interest nationally in the Cheshire schools magazine project. Hon. Members will be aware that competitions exist, organised on a national basis, to encourage schools to write and produce their own newspapers and magazines. Several local education authorities produce occasional collections of children's creative writing, as do individual schools. All those initiatives are very much in keeping with the spirit of the national curriculum for English, which was laid in an order before the House on 6 March. Through editing and contributing school newspapers and magazines, pupils can gain experience in a variety of writing, reading, speaking and listening skills which are incorporated in the order.

I hope that I have made it clear that the aims and objectives of the Cheshire schools magazine project are not at issue. I think that we all agree that it is doing an excellent job, but I am sure that the organisers will recognise, albeit ruefully, that that does not automatically qualify the project for Government funding—which, as I understand it, is the underlying reason for the debate.

As my hon. Friend knows, the Department of Education and Science does not have unlimited resources. Rather, we have minuscule resources which we use at the discretion of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. We receive far too many applications to be able to fund more than a small fraction of them. That means that we cannot consider them just on their individual merits. However sympathetic we may be to an individual project, each one must be looked at in relation to Government policies and must be subject to decisions about priorities for funding out of limited resources. It goes without saying that our underlying aim is to ensure that public funds are used in the most productive and effective way possible.

Virtually all the Department's resources currently available for school curriculum development are being used to ensure that the national curriculum is introduced and implemented efficiently and effectively. We consider this to be of paramount importance. Many aspects of the national curriculum attainment targets and programmes of study reinforce the good work which is already going on in schools and should therefore be familiar to teachers. However, relatively new and developing areas of study will require more careful preparation and guidance. We are concentrating our resources on these areas. In English, for example, our main concern at present is to ensure that teachers have the knowledge and expertise to be able to deliver the language aspects of the national curriculum. To achieve that, we are funding the development of training

[Mr. Alan Howarth]

resource materials and, through education support grant and the local education authority training grant scheme, a major three-year training programme for all teachers of English, including primary teachers.

We have also made substantial provision for local authorities to meet their own local needs and priorities in relation to national curriculum implementation. The education support grant for the basic curriculum and assessment will support expenditure of some £19·3 million on advisory support, staffing and resources in this financial year alone. It would be open to the Cheshire local education authority, or even to several of the LEAs whose schools contribute to "In Our Own Words", to allocate some of this grant to the Cheshire schools magazine project, if they considered that the project was contributing to the implementation of the national curriculum and had priority in this respect over other national-curriculum-related activities. That option is available to the Cheshire local education authority. It is entitled to use resources which have been made available to it by the Government, through a specific grant.

Another key initiative which is particularly relevant to this debate is the Government's education support grant for information technology in schools. That is due to result in the expenditure of some £75 million on IT equipment in schools in the three years beginning April 1988. The increased availability of desk-top publishing facilities which my hon. Friend mentioned will greatly improve opportunities for schools, classes and even individual pupils to produce their own high-quality printed publications.

In the light of those initiatives and our other priorities, we decided, regretfully, that we were unable to offer financial support for the production of "In Our Own Words." I emphasise that the local education authority system is decentralised. This Cheshire project, of which Cheshire is proud because of all the interest that it has engendered elsewhere, is for Cheshire to finance.

I hope that those who are running the project, and Mr. Melling in particular, do not find this decision too discouraging. It is certainly not meant to be. I hope they will take encouragement from the positive views that have been expressed in the debate and the strong support that they can command from my hon. Friend..

Mr. Butler: Naturally, I am extremely disappointed by my hon. Friend's reply, but will he please have a word with his colleague, the Minister for the Arts? If we could obtain a small amount of money from official sources, it might unlock much more money from the private sector. Will my hon. Friend give me at least that assurance?

Mr. Howarth: With pleasure, I give my hon. Friend the assurance that I will draw this debate to the attention of the Minister for the Arts. I fancy that my hon. Friend's advocacy in that quarter would be even more persuasive than mine, but I willingly give the assurance that I will ask my right hon. Friend to consider the case as sympathetically as he possibly can. I appreciate why my hon. Friend would like the Office of Arts and Libraries to support the project.

I know that my hon. Friend, the hon. Member for Warrington, North and all other Members of Parliament with Cheshire constituencies will continue to do all that they can on behalf of the project. I have been grateful for the opportunity to hear more about the project. I am sorry that I have had to give a reply which hon. Members have found discouraging, but I hope that I have been able to explain the difficult position in which the Government find themselves.

Professional Association of Teachers

9.39 pm

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I owe my hon. Friend the Minister a double debt of gratitude, first, for allowing me this short Adjournment debate tonight, and, secondly, for his excellent and most helpful visit to Bolton last Friday which produced the subject for tonight's debate.

My hon. Friend will remember that we visited a primary school and two schools for handicapped children and had a meeting with secondary school headmasters. We then met some members of the Bolton branch of the Professional Association of Teachers, at the home of Dr. Brian Cartwright in Sweetloves lane. Dr. Cartwright is chairman of the Bolton federation of the Professional Association of Teachers which now has about 250 members. My hon. Friend will agree that we had a most useful, helpful and constructive discussion with members of the Professional Association of Teachers, who displayed a positive attitude towards their job as teachers and the role of teachers in society.

As a result of that meeting and the opportunity of tonight's debate, I contacted Mr. Peter Dawson, the general secretary of the Professional Association of Teachers, who was re-elected last year to the union which he helped to found in 1970 in Derby and which improved strongly during the period of militancy by other unions. It was granted recognition nationally by Lord Carlisle, although there is a problem with recognition locally. My hon. Friend will remember that Bolton council unfortunately does not recognise the Professional Association of Teachers. However, the association now has more than 40,000 members and 236 branches nationally.

It is striking that the total membership of the teachers' unions adds up to more than the total number of teachers. There are six teachers' unions, with the National Union of Teachers claiming some 180,000 members. It had more than 200,000 members but membership has declined as a result of its militant attitude. I am glad to learn that it has closed its publication, "Teacher", after spending more than £1 million. The National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers has some 120,000 members. Both those unions have stated that they would never give up their right to strike even in return for new negotiating rights.

The other two main unions, the Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association and the Professional Association of Teachers, with some 130,000 and 40,000 members respectively, would be interested in the possibility of a no-strike deal in return for new negotiating rights. That is certainly the position of the Professional Association of Teachers and could be the view of the AMMA between whom there were some merger rumours last year.

There is a total union membership of more than 500,000 including the 36,000 members of the National Association of Head Teachers and the secondary heads union, so the number of members is in excess of the 400,000 teachers.

I mentioned the question of recognition for the Professional Association of Teachers in a parliamentary question, which was answered on 10 November 1989 as follows:

"governors will acquire more extensive responsibilities for employment matters and will be free to recognise unions not recognised by the local education authority."—[*Official Report*, 10 November 1989; Vol. 159, c. *791*.]

I very much welcome the new realism among the teaching unions since the Education Reform Act 1988. I am glad that all the teaching unions are now urging their members to compete for election to governing bodies and to consider constructively what can be done about teacher shortages.

I contacted Mr. Peter Dawson today and he sent me a short message by facsimile—I should be glad to give my hon. Friend a copy—in which he raised various points that he wished me to mention in tonight's debate. I will briefly go through his points.

Mr. Dawson says:

"The Professional Association of Teachers has very much supported the government in the way in which it has, with successive employment acts, removed the closed shop.

The removal of the closed shop has given the individual employee freedom to belong to the trade union of his choice."

I must add how much I welcome the fact that our teachers are no longer constrained by the closed shop. Of all people, those teaching future generations should understand the importance of freedom and should not be constrained by the need to belong to a trade union imposed on them from above.

Mr. Dawson continues:

"Experience has shown that there are those who see little point in the individual being able to exercise personal freedom, if the union he wants to join is not allowed to represent his interests.

The Professional Association of Teachers has often experienced the scenario where a weak LEA management has kept us out of the negotiating structure simply because the traditional unions have leant on it to keep a status quo.

In other situations the LEA has said that it would like to recognise us but has no say as to who sits on the teachers side of the negotiating committee and therefore we should apply to the employees side.

This kind of weak management approach is most unhelpful to the developing unions, since it is practically impossible to break into the employee private club."

I was most disturbed to read the reference to a "private club" in that connection. It sounded almost like the old dock workers' agreement which, thankfully, we swept away last year. Let us hope that there will be far more freedom in the future for the representation of teachers.

Mr. Dawson continues:

"There are ways of getting round this problem and in some cases (eg Birmingham and Leicestershire) the LEA has been persuaded to recognise PAT, and then has agreed to operate a separate procedure for consultation.

The fact that pay and conditions will be brought together in a new negotiating structure, possibly for the 1991 pay round, is most helpful.

Under this new situation PAT will be able to argue that our inclusion at national level in a national negotiating structure that includes conditions of service should be reflected at Local Authority level. The fact that the Education Reform Act 1988 enables individual schools under local management to recognise us whatever the view taken by the LEA is also useful to us.

Some Local Authorities eg Staffordshire, have told PAT to wait until a new permanent negotiating structure has been established before applying for recognition.

In Bolton we will be making an application for recognition as soon as the new negotiating machinery is established at national level.

The difference between Staffordshire and Bolton is that while Staffordshire can determine who occupies the various seats of the JCC, Bolton cannot, since the teacher membership of the JCC is determined by the Joint Teacher

[Mr. Peter Thurnham]

Committee (JTC) which has its membership determined by the teacher unions themselves and thus we are back to the 'private club' problem.

There are thirty-eight Local Authorities in England and Wales that currently fail to give any recognition to PAT, even though PAT is one of the six nationally recognised teacher unions with 10 per cent. of the overall teaching force in its membership.

The Professional Association of Teachers would like the government to look at the problem of recognition in terms of the current Employment Bill.

While we accept that it would not be appropriate for a government to be involved directly in recognition issues between an employer and a trade union, we do think that a proper framework should be established to enable a developing trade union to obtain recognition from an employer.

As a member of the Council of Managerial and Professional Staffs . . . the Professional Association of Teachers has given its support to the proposal developed by COMPS, that would enable a trade union's case to be properly evaluated.

If the government wishes to encourage non-striking unions, then it should give every support within its powers of legislation to the growth of PAT."

That note was sent to me just this evening. I want to finish by quoting briefly from an article written by Peter Dawson on 25 March 1988. The article is headed "A Vision for Teachers" and Mr. Dawson begins by saying:

"The Book of Proverbs saith: 'Where there is no vision, the people perish.' We live at a time when what is most needed in education is a visionary approach to the role of the teacher."

We should commend Mr. Dawson and the PAT for their work. I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to comment on that work.

9.49 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Alan Howarth): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) on having secured this debate. It is a pleasure to debate with him so soon after our visit to Bolton last Friday, which I enjoyed enormously. I place on record my appreciation of the imaginative efforts that my hon. Friend made to ensure that I had an interesting and varied programme during the day, and my appreciation, too, of the local education authority and its help. We visited some excellent schools and had some useful meetings. One of the most interesting and valuable of all our meetings was with Dr. Brian Cartwright and his fellow officers at the Bolton federation of the Professional Association of Teachers.

My hon. Friend has raised a number of matters of concern to the PAT. I shall not comment on every one of them, but I am glad to have the opportunity to comment on some of these important matters. I stress that it is the view of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that the PAT has an equal right to have its voice heard in our debates on education issues and, more particularly, in the negotiations which take place on teachers' pay and conditions. My right hon. Friend has regular meetings with representatives of the PAT and seeks their views on exactly the same basis as he seeks those of the other five teachers' organisations.

I echo the tribute that my hon. Friend paid to Mr. Peter Dawson, who is one of the most thoughtful and, I think, influential commentators on education issues in this country. My hon. Friend alluded to his article, "A Vision for Teachers", for which we certainly have great respect.

My hon. Friend asked about the new national arrangements for pay determination. We envisage that the PAT will have equal rights to representation on the new negotiating body. We have always made it clear that the teachers' side in any new negotiating machinery would need to be properly representative of the teachers covered by the negotiations. We said that in the Green Paper. That representation must certainly include the views of the PAT.

The question of recognition by local education authorities then arises. My hon. Friend stressed the disappointment of the PAT at the failure of some local education authorities, including Bolton, to recognise the association. I stress that recognition has to be a matter for local education authorities. But it seems to me deplorable and shortsighted of local education authorities to be unwilling to recognise the PAT. They thus deprive themselves of the opportunity of entering into a dialogue with the association. It is one of the employer's tasks to decide what staff organisations he wishes to recognise and for what purposes. I certainly hope that the pattern of national arrangements—which include recognition and participation by the PAT—will be reflected in the local arrangements for recognition, and negotiations on local aspects of education and matters of more particular concern to teachers in terms of their employment.

Given the damage caused to education and to the standing of the teaching profession in consequence of the resort by some other teachers' organisations to strike action and disruption in previous years, I am surprised that some employers are unwilling to recognise the PAT. I deplore any partisan and ideological decision to withhold recognition from teachers' chosen representatives.

I have said how valuable and interesting I found my meeting with the PAT in Bolton. I was deeply impressed by the serious commitment to professional standards of the PAT officers whom I met and I found my discussions with them extremely illuminating. It was pleasing that instead of starting by talking about money and then moving quickly on to express concerns about what other people might be doing or receiving, the representatives based their discussions on what was happening in their own schools. They based their discussion on their personal teaching experience and they conveyed to me how proud and glad they are to be members of the teaching profession and how committed they are to the well-being and educational good fortune of the children whom they teach. Of course, resource implications arose in our discussions, but they arose in a spirit of generous concern for the children they teach and not in a spirit of jealousy or resentment, as I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East will agree.

I was asked whether we regarded it as appropriate to ensure that all local education authorities should recognise a particular trade union or this particular association. I have already said that that must be a matter for individual local education authorities. We believe that it would not be appropriate for the Government to require an employer to recognise a particular union or staff association. That view is based on experience in the 1970s, when it was found that statutory recognition arrangements proved unworkable.

A further question arose about recognition by individual schools and that is an important issue under the new arrangements for the local management of schools. Under delegated budgeting, schools are required to recognise all unions which are recognised by the local

education authority. However, the Professional Association of Teachers will consider it an important and valuable point to learn that, under LMS, schools are not precluded from recognising other unions or associations if they so wish. That arrangement gives the PAT a fair opportunity at least to play its part in the discussions about detailed arrangements in schools. I believe that that is the arrangement that the PAT wanted and we were concerned that matters should be established on that basis.

It is sad that in some areas other unions are unwilling to sit down beside the PAT. It is a shame that that is the case. I believe that that is sometimes the case despite the fact that the local education authority has recognised the PAT. Where that is so, the House would agree that that is preposterous and against the best interests of the teaching profession. The divisiveness and negativism of that attitude must be damaging to the reputation of the profession. I am sure that it does no good at all to the atmosphere in which the profession conducts its affairs and must therefore be damaging to the children.

I am glad that that is not the case at national level and that all the major teachers' unions and organisations are prepared to sit down together in discussions with the Secretary of State. I hope that it will be only a very short time before the history of ostracism and refusal on the part of individual local education authorities to recognise the PAT becomes a thing of the past.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at three minutes to Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 23 May 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Finance

1. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received encouraging him to replace the community charge with a tax on property values.

The Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities (Mr. Michael Portillo): As far as I am aware, no one has made a representation to me in favour of a roof tax based on capital or site values.

Mr. Martin: I welcome my honourable—soon to be right honourable—Friend to the Dispatch Box at his first Environment Question Time. If he manages to extricate himself from his present job with the same high distinction with which he served in the previous two he will deserve the title of the Houdini of the present Government.

Any reversion to domestic property values would mean a return to all the anomalies and unfairnesses that we knew under the rating system, and that would bear down heavily on the elderly, who stay for many years in houses that gain in value around them but whose incomes often do not rise in relation to that value. Would not such a return act as a wealth tax and would not there be a great cry after a while, exactly as there was before we abolished domestic rating?

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend's opening remarks were very kind. He is exactly right: the trouble with the rating system, as all parties recognise—at least they did at one time—was that property is no proxy for the means that a person has, and any taxation system based on property will be unfair for that reason. One must assume, in the absence of any details, that Labour's new plans would be as unfair as, if not more unfair than, the rates.

Mr. Orme: Does not the Minister recognise that the change from rating to a poll tax has meant that Salford needs to employ 300 extra people to collect the poll tax and to spend about £110,000 on an extension to house them? How does he justify that?

Mr. Portillo: The cost of collecting the community charge is about double the cost of collecting the rates, and the number of people paying the community charge is about double the number who were paying the rates. The correlation is exact; the cost per head of collecting the community charge is the same as it was under the rates. This is a fairer and broader-based tax, and that is a price worth paying.

Mr. Knapman: Will my hon. Friend try to provide just a little more detail about the roof tax? I must declare an interest, in that I have been fortunate enough to buy an old mill and a few acres in my constituency, but it is not in very good order—10 years ago the roof fell in. Should I repair it or leave it as it is?

Mr. Portillo: I wish that I could help my hon. Friend. He must, I am afraid, address his appeal to the Opposition. It is for them to supply the details of the new roof tax and, in particular, to explain who will pay it. We understand from the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) that who pays it will be based on maximum choice, and we now have interesting evidence from the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), who says that whether one pays the community charge is a matter for the individual. Presumably that begins to elucidate what maximum choice in payment is about.

Mr. Gould: I welcome the hon. Gentleman to his new task and to the bed of nails that is the poll tax. I accept that, given the work that we understand he is doing on changes to the poll tax, he cannot yet tell us what his alternative will eventually be, but can he at least give us a clue about the features of the poll tax that he finds objectionable and intends to change? Is it the unfairness; or is it the administrative and cost complexity to which he referred; or is it the fundamental principle of a head tax which, as he knows, is shunned in every country with the single exception of Papua New Guinea? Will the changes that he proposes require legislation and, if so, when does he propose to introduce it?

Mr. Portillo: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his kind welcome to me in my new job. If it were a bed of nails the hon. Gentleman would have cushioned the impact considerably by providing me with the opportunity to attack the Labour party, which criticises us without providing any alternative or any details of its policies.

The Labour party is about to make announcements about policy. The Government have no plans to make new announcements on policy this week, and we will look with great interest at what the hon. Gentleman produces tomorrow. My policy since I took on the job from my distinguished predecessor has been to listen carefully to my hon. Friends to discover what anomalies there may be in the present operation of the tax.

Water

2. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what sums of investment are planned in improved water standards over the next 10 years.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Chris Patten): On present plans the water industry will be investing £26·3 billion over the next 10 years to improve standards and to repair and renew its infrastructure.

Mr. Hague: Does my right hon. Friend agree that that figure is the strongest proof that water privatisation has been extremely good news for the environment? Can he

confirm and emphasise that in contrast to the days of state control, such expenditure is no longer subject to the uncertainties of the annual public spending round?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend is entirely right. There is now a massive investment programme in the improvement of the water environment. We look forward to hearing tomorrow the Labour party's plans for renationalising the water industry. I am sure that that programme would enable Labour, if it were ever in office, to do what it did on the last occasion when it cut investment in water and sewerage by 50 per cent. in real terms.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Will not the Minister admit that the Government's record on investment in the water industry has been pitiful and is one reason why there are a number of cases pending in the European Court of Justice? Would not it be far better for the Government to make sure that more investment was put into the water industry so that those cases may be withdrawn?

Mr. Patten: I am more than happy to stand on the record, which is that since 1980 investment in water has risen by 50 per cent. in real terms. Under the previous Labour Government investment in water fell by 50 per cent. in real terms. In so far as I understand the Labour party to have any plans for the water industry, it wants to spend taxpayers' money on buying back water shares.

Mr. Charles Wardle: To facilitate future capital investment more than £5 billion of water authority debt was written off ahead of privatisation. How will the taxpayer bear the cost of that write-off? The obligation to repay £5 billion does not disappear into thin air. How will the taxpayer be required to meet that obligation?

Mr. Patten: The taxpayer has made an important investment in the improvement of water quality. We were able to secure a green dowry for the water industry when we privatised it. As I said, we shall spend over £26 billion on investment in water quality over the next 10 years. It will be interesting to see whether Labour plans to increase that investment programme or whether it will follow past practice which is, whatever it says about infrastructure investment, to cut such investment.

Sulphur Emissions

3. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to attain the targets for reductions in sulphur emissions in the United Kingdom set by the directive from the European Community.

The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. David Trippier): The Government set out their general plans for implementing the directive in a consultation paper published in August 1989. A further consultation paper setting out more detailed figures will be issued shortly.

Mr. McAllion: In her speech to the United Nations the Prime Minister boasted that Britain had a £2 billion programme of flue gas desulphurisation which would reduce acid rain emissions from our power plants. Why within six months of that speech has the programme been slashed by at least a third, and why is Britain turning to the much less effective but cheaper alternative of importing low-sulphur coal which has the added disadvantage of threatening thousands of jobs in the British mining industry? Is it because the Government give a higher priority to cutting public spending and boosting private profits than they do to protecting the environment or the jobs of British workers?

Mr. Trippier: The Government give a higher priority to the environment than the Labour party ever could. I detect from the hon. Gentleman's question that not only is he in a mess, but so is his party. The Labour party seems to wish us to burn as much coal as possible, but at the same time to reduce CO_2 levels. It will be interesting to see how it squares that circle with the release of its policy document tomorrow. Labour's concern for the environment is not worth the paper it is written on. Its order of priority is the National Union of Mineworkers first and the environment second. That illustrates perfectly why the Labour party will never be a credible party of the environment.

Mr. Butler: What will be the relative cost to the consumer in attaining those targets, of flue gas desulphurisation and of the importation of low-sulphur coal?

Mr. Trippier: I hope that the consultation paper that will be issued shortly will give the informaton on costs that my hon. Friend requires.

Mr. Allen: Will the Minister ask his colleagues in the Department of Energy why it supported British Coal's programme of closing the pits that produced low-sulphur coal? Will he also ask the Secretary of State to reinstate the programme to ensure that our power stations are cleaned up so that they can use British coal rather than cheap imports, and we can retain jobs in the Nottinghamshire coalfield?

Mr. Trippier: I am certain that the overriding concern of British Coal is economics. The hon. Member knows that its strategy is aimed at achieving a competitive coal industry. That is the best guarantee of mineworkers' jobs. Keeping uncompetitive pits open will destroy jobs in the long term.

Rural Housing

4. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to assess the need for new housing in the rented sector in rural areas.

The Minister for Housing and Planning (Mr. Michael Spicer): There is a requirement for low-cost housing for rent and sale in some rural areas. That is why we introduced our rural housing initiative, including a special Housing Corporation programme and new planning rules enabling additional land to be made available for low-cost housing for local people.

Mr. Shepherd: Is my hon. Friend aware that the shire district councils are experiencing acute frustration in discharging their function as facilitators of housing in rural areas, having made their assessments on requirements for both rented and for-sale accommodation? Is he aware that, for example, time and time again South Herefordshire district council has had a housing association interested in a project but has received no money from the Housing Corporation? Is my hon. Friend satisfied that the balance of distribution within the Housing Corporation's resources properly reflects the real

requirements of the rural areas which, in view of demographic changes, have exactly the same needs as the urban areas in terms of homelessness?

Mr. Spicer: I hope that the Housing Corporation will give priority to rural schemes where local authorities have provided their own resources, including cheap land. At least five initiatives specifically relating to rural areas have been taken. The Housing Corporation is placing special emphasis on housing for rent in rural areas. The others are the low-cost home ownership programme, the Rural Development Commission's start-up programme, the low-cost shared ownership programme and the special planning arrangements for low-cost homes. I hope that authorities in rural areas will take note of those schemes and make the best use of them.

Mr. Bermingham: Further to the question of the hon. Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd)—[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."] At long last, the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) has shown that he can count fingers. That is an advance on his previous state, when he could not even count.

Does the Minister agree, in the light of the relevant question from the hon. Member for Hereford, that unless we keep young people in rural and semi-rural areas, the drain into the cities will put pressure on them and will diminish the work forces of rural areas? Does he also agree that, without further initiatives, there will be no hope of providing the homes that are needed for youngsters in those areas?

Mr. Spicer: I agree with the hon. Gentleman and with my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) on this matter, and that is why we announced the initiatives. I think that we should let the initiatives go through and see how they work out.

Mr. David Nicholson: Would not the encouragement of young people, or people of working age, to remain in rural areas through the provision of low-cost housing, to which I think we all attach importance, help in the retention of village post offices and village shops generally which are threatened—I make no complaint about this—by high interest rates and a combination of the uniform business rate and the community charge? That is definitely a problem in rural areas, and I hope that my hon. Friend will address himself to it.

Mr. Spicer: I agree with my hon. Friend that if people live in villages, especially people with young families, they will spend money in the local post office, and that that will be good for those businesses.

Mr. Soley: The Minister has developed an unenviable reputation for not answering questions on housing, and his performance today has been no exception. I shall ask him a nice easy question today to help him regain his reputation. Why are Lady Anson and the Conservative-controlled Association of District Councils, as well as nearly every Conservative-controlled local authority in rural areas, saying that the schemes that the Minister has introduced do not begin to touch the problem and that a major change of Government policy is required if the housing crisis that is the result of a lack of affordable accommodation for rent or sale in rural areas is to be reversed? Why, in the hon. Gentleman's judgment, is Lady Anson wrong?

Mr. Spicer: I shall answer the hon. Gentleman directly. Five initiatives have been introduced only recently. If an initiative has been introduced in the past few months, which in some instances is true, the best course is to see how it works out and to make a judgment later. Contrary to what the hon. Gentleman says, all the signs are that low-cost houses are being built in rural areas, and that did not happen under Labour Governments.

Local Government Finance

5. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the way in which community charge is levied on owners of empty property.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): I have received a large number of representations about the level of standard charge which some authorities have set and the degree to which they have used their discretionary powers.

Mr. Yeo: Does my hon. Friend share my concern at the insistence of many local authorities on levying a standard charge on the owners of empty properties which are awaiting resale following the removal of the owners to a new permanent address? Will my hon. Friend make it clear to local authorities that, as Parliament has given them the power to levy either a personal charge or a nil charge on some properties, they should consider making wider use of that power?

Mr. Chope: I share the concern that my hon. Friend has stressed. That is why we shall write to local authorities to ascertain how they have been exercising their discretion. If we are dissatisfied, we shall have to consider whether we should specify the maximum multipliers that they can use in certain cases.

Mr. Battle: Will the Minister explain why poll tax, if it is not a property tax, is levied on second homes? Why is it levied on empty properties? Why is it levied on caravans, with the result that people in Leeds who own a modest caravan can no longer afford to go on holiday? Is not it a property tax?

Mr. Chope: Domestic rates used to be levied on empty property. My recollection from sitting in Committee with the hon. Gentleman is that the Labour party is in favour of a contribution being made by owners of empty properties towards the cost of local government expenditure. That is why we have a standard community charge.

Mrs. Peacock: Is my hon. Friend aware that many young people in my constituency and throughout the country who have bought a home in a bad state of repair to renovate are now being charged double standard community charge as well as their personal community charge? It is a disgrace. What will my hon. Friend do about it?

Mr. Chope: I share my hon. Friend's concern. Responsibility must lie with individual councils. They have discretion, and some have not used it as I would have done. That some local authorities have found a reason to exempt their own empty council properties from the standard community charge shows the sense of priorities of some local authorities.

Mr. Blunkett: Why, if the local authorities are to blame, was the scheme introduced by the Government in such a way, and why were 100 per cent. collection rates presumed, on the presumption that the money would be made up from the standard poll tax and the grant distribution would be assumed to have a standard poll tax collection rate of two per empty property? Is the Under-Secretary of State willing, in the review that we hear so much about, to ensure that local authorities are properly funded so that they can use their discretion to help all the people that Opposition Members believe should be assisted? Will he tell us why a property tax that is not a property tax needs a property tax to catch up on those who own second homes, who need to pay for local community services but cannot pay a property tax because the Government have abolished it?

Mr. Chope: Perhaps my answer will be too brief for the hon. Gentleman. The Government make no assumptions about income from the standard community charge when calculating revenue support grant. Therefore, there is no pressure on English local authorities to set the maximum multiplier in all cases. There is absolute discretion, and many Conservative Members are concerned that local authorities have not been exercising that discretion reasonably.

Storm Damage

6. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will increase the Government's package of aid to replace trees lost in the recent storms.

Mr. Trippier: In February I announced a £1 million package of aid to Task Force Trees and English Heritage to help to replace amenity and historically important trees lost in this year's storms. We shall consider the provision of further aid as part of this autumn's public expenditure survey. In addition, my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food recently anounced special cash help to assist planting of broadleaved trees in woodlands damaged by the storms.

Mr. Townsend: Although I pay tribute to the Government, the Countryside Commission and English Heritage for the work that they are doing to restore the widespread damage following the storms, does the Minister agree that it is now perfectly obvious that more needs to be done? Will he have a word with the Chancellor of the Exchequer to try to get him a little more interested in restoring damage and planting acorns—concepts that should not be utterly alien to the Treasury?

Mr. Trippier: I am sympathetic to my hon. Friend's underlying point. It is perfectly clear from the way that the Government have responded, especially with the near £30 million that has been spent following the incredible tragedy of the 1987 storms, that our commitment is total. Obviously, we shall have to wait for the negotiations in the public expenditure survey round later this year, but I have sympathy for the underlying point.

Mr. Tony Banks: Is the Minister aware of the storm devastation that still exists in the south-east? A number of trees still have not been cleared, never mind new planting. I echo what the hon. Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) said. Much more money is needed. How many trees were lost in those two major storms and how many trees have been replanted, given the small amount of money that the Government have made available?

Mr. Trippier: We have had a substantial number of applications from various bodies, including local authorities, and it would be impossible for me to catalogue the total number of trees affected, but after the recent storms we received 148 applications which I believe are eligible for grant aid. Some of that money will be forthcoming this financial year and some more next year in the public expenditure survey settlement. The hon. Gentleman makes an important point. I admit that the bulk of the cost is not in planting but in clearing fallen trees.

Local Government Finance

7. **Mr. Day:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what a person on average male earnings would pay in local income tax in 1990-91 in order to raise the same amount of revenue as the community charge in Truro.

Mr. Portillo: If we had a system of local income tax which raised the same amount as the community charge nationally, a single person in Truro on average male earnings could have paid up to £888.

Mr. Day: I thank my hon. Friend for that most interesting and illuminating reply for which I am sure the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) is grateful. Would it be even more helpful if roof tax figures were available for Truro and the rest of the country? Does my hon. Friend agree that the expected publication of Labour's mini-manifesto tomorrow is likely to throw no more light on the subject than Labour has shed on it in the past? Do not the public have a right to expect an answer concerning the Labour party's proposals?

Mr. Portillo: I agree with my hon. Friend that it would be helpful to have authoritative figures from the Labour party on the roof tax. My hon. Friend speculates that tomorrow's policy document will not provide much illumination on that subject. I can hardly believe that that is true. Labour party spokesmen—Mr. Peter Mandelson in particular—have more or less assured us that the details will be spelt out in tomorrow's document. Therefore, my hon. Friend must be mistaken if he says that they will not be forthcoming tomorrow.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: I assure the Minister and the hon. Member for Cheadle (Mr. Day) that Truro has absolutely no interest in the Labour party's roof tax. It is, however, interested in the local income tax proposals. Although the Minister is new to his job, he ought to be aware that his figures are not based on the kind of local income tax system that we would introduce. The local income tax figure for an average household in my constituency is £317, compared with an average household poll tax bill of £622. Cheadle constituents may be interested to know that the average local income tax bill for each household there would be £365, compared with an average household poll tax bill of £798. The hon. Member for Cheadle lost his seat as a councillor to the Liberals and no doubt will lose his parliamentary seat at the next general election.

Mr. Portillo: All I can say is "abracadabra." The SLD has come up with a system under which everyone everywhere pays less. Today I can reveal how that trick is achieved. Part of the trick is to take last year's figures, thus raising only £7·2 billion in local income tax in England whereas this year £10·8 billion is being raised from the community charge. Immediately, therefore, the hon. Gentleman's figures are out by a cool 50 per cent. Furthermore, my figures compare what a person on average male earnings would pay in each constituency. We are looking at what a person on the same level of earnings would pay in each constituency, which seems to be the only valid comparison.

Environmental Conference, Bergen

8. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the recent international conference on the environment at Bergen, Norway.

Mr. Trippier: I led the United Kingdom delegation to the ministerial conference on sustainable development in Bergen on 8 to 16 May which was attended by all member countries of the Economic Commission for Europe. It examined progress within the ECE on implementing the recommendations of the Brundtland report and allowed us to consider, from a regional point of view, the most crucial issues that will need to be decided at the United Nations conference on environment and development in 1992. It was also the first opportunity for western Environment Ministers to meet their newly elected colleagues from east Europe. The United Kingdom won praise for its constructive approach to the conference as whole, and in particular for its contribution to the forward-looking ministerial declaration which was adopted unanimously and by acclamation and a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Jones: Does the Minister agree that it is a scandal that the conference failed to agree on even the modest first step of holding carbon dioxide emissions at their current level in 10 years' time? How can the Government say that they are committed to fighting global warming when all that they did at the conference was slavishly to follow the United States line?

Mr. Trippier: That is drivel. If the hon. Gentleman compares the Noordwyk declaration with that which was agreed to at Bergen, he will see that a step has been taken in the right direction. The Bergen conference was not about carbon dioxide emissions but about sustainable development. The conference which is to concentrate on carbon dioxide emissions, their stabilisation and future reduction, is the second world climate change conference in Geneva, when the United Kingdom delegation will be led by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. It is absolute tripe and demonstrably daft for the hon. Gentleman to suggest to me, of all people, that we adopted the American line when we acted as honest brokers in bringing the Americans together with all the other countries at the conference.

Mr. Bill Walker: When my hon. Friend and his colleagues attend conferences, do they ever discuss not just man-made problems but natural problems? Many of the difficulties and hazards to the environment are caused by nature. Is it not about time that we began to consider methods of rectifying the problems which result from natural disasters?

Mr. Trippier: I accept entirely that one of the most important issues that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has to address is global climate changes which are caused by man-made problems and those which occur naturally. That will be the subect of the three reports which I hope will be made public prior to the final report from Professor Bolin in late August.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Is the Minister aware that we welcome the seriousness of his approach to the problems in Bergen and acknowledge that he played a part in telling everyone how serious the problems under discussion were? Is he aware that we are disappointed, as were many of the participants, that he blocked some of the proposals, particularly the attempt to get agreement on an immediate commitment to stabilise carbon dioxide emissions by the year 2000? Is not it a fact that the Minister and the Secretary of State recognise the scale of the problems being discussed but are constantly undermined by other Cabinet Ministers, including the Secretaries of State for Transport and for Energy and the Prime Minister herself? When does the Minister expect to make progress with his Cabinet colleagues, or will this be another case of Environment Ministers saying, "abracadabra"?

Mr. Trippier: What a pity—I was most impressed and incredibly grateful to the hon. Lady for the way in which she commenced her series of questions, and I am most grateful to her for her kind words about me. I have said already that the conference was not about carbon dioxide. If the hon. Lady had been in my place at that conference, she would not have agreed to a target or to any level, and many other countries also would not reach such an agreement—it was not just Britain and the Americas—because those matters have to be addressed in Geneva in November. The Government have been a large subscriber to the IPCC process, both financially and in terms of human resources, so it would be ridiculous for us not to wait until the IPCC has reported before deciding targets. The point was effectively made by the Danish Minister at the conference, who said that she was fed up with having to attend so many international conferences—seven in the past nine months—at which every main issue expected to be addressed involved carbon dioxide emissions. The hon. Lady must be a little more patient as it is only a few months until the Geneva conference.

European Environment Agency

10. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the role of the proposed European Environment Agency.

Mr. Chris Patten: The aim of the agency is to provide the Commission and member states with objective, reliable and comparable environmental information at Community level. It will work by co-ordinating information from a network of national institutions and co-operate with other international bodies to avoid duplication. The regulation setting out the role of the agency in detail was adopted on 7 May 1990.

Mr. Paice: My right hon. Friend will agree that the agency will gather statistics, which will prove once and for

all that Britain is well ahead of many other European countries in protection of the environment. Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Labour council in Cambridge has said that it does not wish the agency to be based in the city of Cambridge, thus displaying the council's real level of concern? May I assure my right hon. Friend that there are many suitable sites in my constituency close to the Cambridge city boundary where we would be pleased and proud to see the agency based?

Mr. Patten: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Whatever others may have done or said, he has consistently and vigorously pressed the case for Cambridge and the Cambridge area as the best base for this important agency. Cambridge has all the resources that the agency needs to operate successfully. It is the best candidate in the European Community, and I very much hope that the decision will take account of the overwhelming case for Cambridge and the surrounding area.

Mr. Maclennan: Will the Secretary of State also recognise the strong case that has been made by Aberdeen university to share in the work done by the environment agency and in the north of Scotland? As we do not wish to see centralisation, would not it be appropriate to steer some of the work north of the border?

Mr. Patten: If we had the opportunity at this Question Time, I have no doubt that more than 600 good cases could be made for the agency to be sited in different parts of the country—I will forbear to press the argument for Bath—but whatever the case for other universities, it is recognised well beyond our shores that Cambridge has an outstanding case.

Planning

11. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many simplified planning zones have been set up since the scheme commenced; and how many are in the pipeline for future approval.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Colin Moynihan): In England, simplified planning zones have been established in Derby and Corby. A further eight zones are at various stages of preparation.

Mr. Riddick: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the biggest problems facing entrepreneurs trying to bring enterprise and jobs to inner-city areas are the obstacles placed in their way by unhelpful planning authorities such as Kirklees council? Does he agree that we should be doing everything in our power, including the use of simplified planning zones, to make it easier to develop in inner-city areas, thereby reducing the pressure to build on green field sites?

Mr. Moynihan: I recognise the excellent work that my hon. Friend has done in trying to persuade his council to use a simplified planning zone. *[Interruption.]* Some Labour Members laugh, but many Labour councils have recognised the benefits of simplified planning zones for regenerating areas where there has been industrial after-use and for jobs. I am surprised that Labour Members laugh at the prospect of councils working with Government to create jobs.

Mr. Hardy: Does the Minister recognise that many local authorities are extremely anxious that deregulation will lead to danger for the community and a risk to the environment? Will he guarantee that simplified planning zones will not give freedom to the irresponsible entrepreneur, who may be most interested in such development?

Mr. Moynihan: The hon. Member will know that a simplifed planning zone is established not at the direction of Government but at the request of the local authority concerned which, as with local plans, must undertake proper consultation, taking into account the important point that the hon. Gentleman made.

Mrs. Currie: Is my hon. Friend aware that in Derby we are thrilled to bits with our simplified planning zone, which has enabled the quick clearance of a derelict site and the erection of fine industrial units which have been let or sold, to the delight of the local business community? Will my hon. Friend come and see what we are doing in Derby so that he can assure Opposition Members that their fears are groundless?

Mr. Moynihan: It is always a pleasure to accept my hon. Friend's invitation to visit Derby. If I did so, I would see the 41-hectare site which, as a result of an imaginative response by the people of Derby and the simplified planning procedures, will enable an area of industrial plant to be brought back into active use in the interests of local people.

Mr. O'Brien: Does not the Minister's reply show that the simplified planning zone system is all to cock and on the whole not welcomed by local government? How well does it fit in with the present unitary development plan and the overall strategic plan? Has the Minister given thought to the planning problems that local authorities face and does he intend to help them by explaining how the scheme will fit in with unitary planning?

Mr. Moynihan: I am surprised that the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman does not know the answer to that question. The answer is that the zones fit in perfectly. When local councils draw up their plans they will look at the specific areas where they need the opportunity to allow planning to go ahead without cumbersome procedures. They can identify those areas, propose simplified planning zones and institute them within the overall remit of their unitary development plans.

Right to Buy

12. **Mr. Gerald Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions his Department has had with Southwark council about the level of capital repair charges which it sets for tenants who have exercised their right to buy.

Mr. Chope: The Department has recently written to the London borough of Southwark following representations by my hon. Friend and others about pre-sale estimates of service charges for repairs and improvements.

Mr. Bowden: My hon. Friend will be aware that those of us who take a close interest in the affairs of Southwark are convinced that Southwark council is using or misusing procedures under the right to buy to discourage people who are considering purchasing and, indeed, to demoralise those who have already purchased. Are the Government prepared to sit by and see their laws challenged in that

way? More importantly, are the Government prepared to see the rightful aspirations of those who wish to purchase thwarted by those procedures?

Mr. Chope: No. Parliament has given tenants the right to buy their flats and the Government are determined to see that those tenants have the right to exercise that right. My hon. Friend is right in suspecting that the failure in performance of Southwark council is largely due to a lack of will. Southwark has sold only about 690 flats in a period when Wandsworth sold more than 10,000.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Is the Minister aware that, not only in Southwark but elsewhere, councils which did no repair work on property before it was sold then estimate the repairs required in the next five years, apparently plucking figures out of the air and charging enormous sums of money—sometimes thousands of pounds—per purchaser per year? What do the Government intend to do to clarify the law? More importantly, does the individual purchaser have a right of access to the information on which the council carried out the valuation? If not, the tenant has no possibility of challenging the figure and apparently no option other than to pay. Freedom of information as well as clarification of the law is needed.

Mr. Chope: This is, indeed, a complicated area of the law. It appears that Southwark council is trying to use that to its advantage. I have written to my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden). Certainly it seems to the Government that Southwark has wrongly interpreted the law in certain respects. I should be happy to explain to the hon. Gentleman the Government's concerns about that. The hon. Gentleman referred to the amount of resources that Southwark has and the amount that it spends. Southwark has masses of resources. It receives £33 million in its housing investment programme allocation and this year it is likely to receive about £94 million in housing revenue account subsidy.

Local Government Finance

14. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to introduce amending legislation for changes in the poll tax.

Mr. Portillo: The Government have already announced that they intend to bring forward legislation to amend the law on the standard community charge as it relates to caravans.

Mr. Winnick: Is the Minister for the poll tax disappointed that the tax remains as deeply unpopular as it was when it was first introduced? Will the recently appointed co-ordinator of Government lies—I am sorry, I mean "information"—have an input in any adjustments to the poll tax?

Mr. Portillo: Since I took on the new responsibilities, it has become clear to me that the principle that everyone should contribute to the cost of local government is becoming more and more widely accepted. Indeed, I remember hearing the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) say yesterday that the most unpopular system for local taxation in Scotland was not the community charge but the roof tax proposed by the Labour party.

Mr. Conway: Will my hon. Friend bear in mind that, although there is no real need to amend that legislation, if he is to make the community charge more understandable and more accountable in the metropolitan areas, he should amend section 7 of the Local Government Act 1972 and enable the county councils to be elected on the basis of one third retiring annually so that local electors do not have to wait until 1993 to express their views about the high charges that have been levied by Labour county councils in the main?

Mr. Portillo: I understand the point that my hon. Friend is making. He may be thinking of that the fact that in his own county of Shropshire income has increased over the past year by 16·3 per cent., which had a major effect on the community charge in Shrewsbury which was set at £333. I well understand that point and urge county councils to be responsible when setting their income demands because under the new system such demands impact on the charge payer.

Mrs. Mahon: What extra resources will the Minister give the poll-tax-capped councils which have to send out extra bills for the administrative costs? In view of those capped councils, will the Minister explain the accountability argument?

Mr. Portillo: It was with some regret that the Government felt that they had to embark on charge-capping, but unfortunately some councils exercised themselves in such a way that they overspent excessively. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State therefore felt bound to offer some protection to the community charge payers. In proposing the caps, my right hon. Friend took into account the administrative costs of rebilling.

Mr. Dunn: Will my hon. Friend consider introducing legislation to help prevent the disgraceful practice of the Labour-controlled Walsall council, now also being followed by Labour-controlled Bradford council, that people living in Conservative wards are to receive fewer services and have less money spent on them than those in a Labour ward? Given that tomorrow the Labour party will be making a further attempt to con the British people into believing that Labour is suitable for Government, does my hon. Friend agree that the practices of Labour in power are nearer the truth?

Mr. Portillo: I have been so appalled by the allegations of that spiteful act that I am looking urgently into the matter. I have spoken today to Councillor Pickles in Bradford and am trying to establish what is going on. It would certainly be disgraceful if those practices were actually being carried out. I urge community charge payers in those areas to examine whether they have some recourse under the law as it now stands.

Mr. Gould: If the Minister is unable to tell us what changes he proposes to the poll tax, or whether legislation will be required, will he at least assure us that as soon as he has made up his mind he will make an immediate statement to the House? In the light of his earlier reply that all that he can say is "Abracadabra", will he assure the House that he is under no illusion that such an approach will suffice in the case of the poll tax?

Mr. Portillo: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman has risen for a second time this afternoon and is leading with his chin once more. It is not the Government who are due to make an announcement—it is the Labour party, and we shall be looking closely at what the Labour party

says. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I are currently engaged in trying to establish what anomalies there might be in the operation of the present tax. If we conclude that any changes are needed—I have not yet reached any conclusions—we shall, of course, make an announcement to the House.

Water Quality

15. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to improve the water quality off the north Devon coast; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: In October last year, the Government announced details of a £1·4 billion programme designed to bring United Kingdom bathing waters up to European quality standards within the next 10 years; £123 million of this was identified for improvement schemes on the north Devon coast. On 5 March my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced that all significant discharges to coastal waters would be subjected to at least primary treatment, at an estimated cost of £1·5 billion. Discussions are now being held with the water industry and relevant regulatory bodies about the implementation of this investment programme.

Mr. Speller: I hope that my hon. Friend realises that the phrase "primary treatment" just means that the sewage is chopped up and does not improve the position. Is he aware that 118 licensed consents for disposal of sewage—either raw or partially treated—have been granted in the Bristol area, and that the sewage goes into the Bristol channel? I thank my hon. Friend for the good figures in the Finance Bill, but does he agree that our aim should be that eventually no sewage, partially treated or otherwise, is dumped in the sea? We must look to other alternatives such as landfill, incineration and controlled treatment on land, for sewage that is now sent into the sea. The sea should not be the open sewer that it is at present.

Mr. Trippier: The Government's view is the same as that expressed in my hon. Friend's two last points. He is right to point out that, given that alternatives must now be examined as a result of the policy decision made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and announced at the North sea conference, the other main options are incineration and landfill, or perhaps the use of treated sewage sludge as agricultural fertiliser. The House and every local authority must come to terms with the fact that alternative methods of disposal must be examined. That means that local authorities in particular must accept responsibility, especially for planning. We cannot simply wave a magic wand to make the dreadful stuff disappear.

Empty Property

17. **Mr. Crowther:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the percentage of homes that have been empty for more than six months for *(a)* private housing, *(b)* housing associations, *(c)* local authorities and *(d)* Government and other public sectors.

Mr. Michael Spicer: At April 1989, about 1 per cent. of local authority and 2 per cent. of housing association dwellings had been empty for more than six months. I do not have corresponding information for other ownership groups, but surveys in 1977 and 1980 suggested that at any time up to 3 per cent. of private sector dwellings had been vacant for more than six months.

Mr. Crowther: In the light of that reply, does the Minister agree that it is clear that, in the main, local authorities are exercising their responsibilities for their share of the nation's housing stock in an efficient way? Will he and other Ministers kindly stop attacking local authorities at every turn, as the local authorities are clearly doing better than other sectors?

Mr. Spicer: I do not regard a total of 100,000 empty local authority houses—which the housing authorities are responsible for providing—as acceptable. However, I accept that a large number of private sector dwellings—some 600,000—are also unoccupied. Why are they unoccupied? According to our surveys and research, the main reason for that is years of Socialist policies, such as rent control and controlled tenures and it has become somehow unacceptable to rent houses—that is something that we must put right. There has been legislation to deregulate and liberalise the private rented sector; we should now be putting self-confidence back into landlords so that they start to bring their houses back on to the market.

Mr. Tracey: Is my hon. Friend aware that just five Labour authorities in London have more than 10,000 empty public sector houses? In addition, five Labour authorities in London have £83 million of rents uncollected. As two of those authorities are Lambeth and Southwark councils, does the Minister agree that if they put their house in order it would help the homeless in London?

Mr. Spicer: I agree absolutely with my hon. Friend. That is why in recent months the Government have given £250 million to local authorities to renovate their housing stock—especially Labour authorities, because, as my hon. Friend said, they are far and away the worst culprits. That money will help to put those houses back into use, so that they can be used by the homeless people to whom my hon. Friend referred.

Water Quality

18. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his Department's monitoring of eutrophication in British waters.

Mr. Trippier: The National Rivers Authority is responsible for monitoring eutrophication in England and Wales.

Mr. Wallace: I am sure that if the authority is doing its job it will have recognised that there is a problem of eutrophication in many British waters. Given that phosphates in detergents are a significant component cause of the problem, will the Government consider taking measures, in common with many other countries, to limit the amount of phosphates in detergent products and to introduce phosphate-stripping mechanisms in sewerage plants? I am sure that the Minister agrees that this is an important problem. What action are the Government taking?

Mr. Trippier: I am sorry, but I must disagree with the hon. Gentleman's initial statement. He said that many inland sites are affected by eutrophication, but that is not correct. In the United Kingdom there are only a few affected inland sites, such as Loch Neagh in Northern Ireland, certain parts of the Norfolk broads and Loch Leven in Scotland. Earlier this year the natural environment research council confirmed that the United Kingdom's nutrient imputs, including phosphates, did not contribute to the accumulation of nutrients even in the North sea and the eastern part of the North sea where problems of eutrophication have occurred. It is more accurate to say that there is a serious problem of eutrophication on the continent in the Waddenzee, the Danish coastal waters, the German bight and the Adriatic sea.

Environmental Issues

19. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his policy towards increasing public awareness of environmental issues.

Mr. Chris Patten: I am firmly committed to increasing public awareness of environmental issues. My Department has taken many initiatives in this area, including greater public access to information, explanatory leaflets on environmental issues and plans for eco-labelling of products.

Mr. Mans: Does my right hon. Friend agree that at the moment the public is suffering most from too much inaccurate information and ill-informed opinion on the environment? Anything that the Government can do to increase the amount of factual information available must be an improvement on the present position.

Mr. Patten: I totally agree with my hon. Friend. That is one reason why we have advocated the establishment of an environment agency, which we discussed earlier in Question Time. The more the public are aware of real and accurate information about comparative environmental statistics the more they will recognise that this country has a good record, but that we are not complacent about it and we want to do even better.

Points of Order

3.31 pm

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: It is a private Members' day, but I shall take the point of order from Mr. Marlow first.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As you know, my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) is about to explain to the House, not before time, the workings of the roof tax *[Interruption.]* One would have thought that that would be of great interest to the whole House, but, unfortunately, the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), who is the Opposition spokesman on the subject, is not here. We feel that he might want to listen to my hon. Friend's speech. Is there any way in which we can get him back to the Chamber? If not, as the roof tax is, I believe, an Opposition proposal in fundamental form, would it be more appropriate for my hon. Friend to speak from the Opposition Front Bench?

Mr. Speaker: Of course, it may be that the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) will come back when these points of order come to an end.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. During Question Time, a Minister at the Department of the Environment made an entirely unwarranted and unjustified attack on the city of Bradford. I said that he was trying to trample on local democracy and intimidate Labour councillors. Is it right that a Minister should be allowed to do that, particularly when Labour councillors, after their sweeping victory at the local elections, are busy clearing up the rotten mess left behind by the Tories?

Mr. Speaker: We often hear things with which we may violently disagree in this Chamber. It was in order.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Further to the point of order of my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) I wonder whether you would rule that it would be in order for my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) to speak from the Opposition Dispatch Box in the absence of the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould)?

Mr. Speaker: That is a hypothetical matter.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. If my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) manages to get back, will you have a word with him to tell him to bring the Chancellor of the Exchequer along as well, so that he can come to the Dispatch Box to try to explain to the House why, in the first four months of this year, we have had a balance of payments deficit of £7 billion? That is the worst we have ever had and, despite all the gloss and the propaganda of the past few days, that balance of payments deficit is getting no better. We want him here.

Mr. Speaker: These are legitimate matters to raise on the Adjournment motion. The deputy Prime Minister, the Leader of the House, will be present to answer them. I cannot answer them.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): On a point of Order, Mr. Speaker. Can you rule on this matter? There was originally in the list of Environment questions for today Question 7 in my name, which read as follows:

"To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment"——

Mr. Speaker: For today?

Mr. Hughes: Not today's Order Paper but in the paper printed on Monday and on previous days. The question was:

"To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his Department's responsibilities in respect of the environmental protection of Antarctica."

The question was transferred to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. I understand from inquiry that the decision was made not by the Table Office but by the Department. I further understand that the Department of the Environment accepts that it has responsibilities other than those relating to the United Kingdom. It is a very important matter. Environment Ministers tell us about global warming conferences, follow-up conferences to Brundtland and Bergen, and international discussions. They must have international responsibilities.

Can you inquire whether it is possible in future for Members to table questions to Environment Ministers about international environmental issues, or is it the case in this area, as in so many others, that what we feared is the truth: that they are given no responsibility by the Government, by the Prime Minister or by others for anything outside the remit of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Speaker: Order. It has taken the hon. Member five minutes to make his point.

Mr. Hughes: I should be grateful if, today or later, Mr. Speaker, you would tell us whether we can ask the Department of the Environment questions which relate to anything outside the United Kingdom.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman alleged that the Table Office had transferred the question.

Mr. Hughes: No.

Mr. Speaker: I am responsible for the Table Office. The question was not transferred by the Table Office.

Mr. Hughes: That is what I said.

Mr. Speaker: It is a matter for the Department whether questions are transferred. The hon. Gentleman should take it up with the Department. It is not my responsibility.

Mr. David Evans (Welwyn Hatfield): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I seek your guidance on free postage and free notepaper in the House. Is it against the rules for a Member to use that privilege to circularise constituents? If it is against the rules, will you please take swift and strong action against the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen), who persists in abusing that privilege?

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think I can protect the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen). He has seen the error of his ways and has paid for the notepaper and postage that he used.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will have heard during Environment questions the young and thrusting new

Minister for the poll tax making a disgraceful allegation about Bradford, which you have already covered. Did you also hear him say that, in order to find out whether the allegation was true, he had contacted the ex-leader of Bradford city council? Surely the constitutional relationship should have a Minister talking to the elected leader of Bradford city council. Will the Minister, through you, give an assurance that he will contact the elected leader—

Mr. Speaker: Order. That sounds like a continuation of Question Time. This is private Members' time. I am bound to take points of order into account in making my selection.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Week after week, the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) has filled the Order Paper with pages of proposed alterations to the rules. Is it not time he obeyed his own rules before proposing new ones?

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you explain to the lot opposite that there is a community charge, and the charge is that the poll tax is unacceptable, north and south of the border? I say that as a so-called Toy Town revolutionary. Toy Town revolutionaries will always challenge Toy Town reactionaries. The arguments and the campaign are, "Don't collect, don't co-operate—fight back."

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot answer questions like that. It is time that we all went away for the holiday.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR FRIDAY 15 JUNE

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. Brian Sedgemore
Mr. Michael Latham
Mr. Alan Williams

BILL PRESENTED

Private Security (Registration)

Mr. Bruce George, supported by Sir Barney Hayhoe, Mr. Michael Mates, Mr. John McFall, Mr. John Home Robertson, Mr. Neil Thorne, Mr. John McWilliam, Mr. John Wilkinson, Mr. John Cartwright, Mr. Menzies Campbell and Mr. Don Dixon, presented a Bill to provide for the establishment of a Private Security Registration Council and to give that Council powers and functions for the regulation of firms offering private security servicess and of persons employed as private security agents; to require the registration for such firms and persons with the Council; to impose requirements upon such firms and persons; to make provision of training of persons employed as private security agents; to make provision for compensation to be paid in respect of inadequately insured death or injury arising from the activities of such firms and persons; to define offences and specify penalties; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 15 June and to be printed. [Bill 148.]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Criminal Damage (Northern Ireland)

Ordered,

That the Criminal Damage (Compensation) (Northern Ireland) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 1990 (S.R. (N.I.), 1990, No. 79) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

European Community Documents

Ordered,

That European Community Document No. 4748/90 relating to glazing, masses and dimensions and tyres of road vehicles be referred to a Standing Committee on European Community Documents.—*[Mr. Garel-Jones.]*

Roof Tax

3.40 pm

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to empower local authorities to raise revenue by levying charges on domestic property.

I should first of all like to deny the rumour that has been put around unworthily by some of my hon. Friends that this is an unserious or frivolous occasion, and what I am proposing this afternoon is a spoof tax. I assure you, Mr. Speaker, that this is a serious event. This afternoon I am seeking to advance democratic debate and provide alternatives for the people throughout the country to choose between. Recognising as I do that the Labour party is out of practice in introducing legislation into the House, I thought that I would distil the wisdom of the past 12 years to give it the opportunity, through me, to introduce its flagship local government proposals.

One thing we know is that the Labour party is firmly resolved to abolish the community charge as soon as it assumes office. The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) has said so on many occasions. Thanks to the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), we also know that the Labour party is determined to produce an alternative. Before the local government elections in 1988, he said:

"Our local government campaign must not be, and will not be, a series of attacks on the Government. Simply to oppose is the sort of vacuous opposition which the people of this country despise. We must, and we will, offer our alternatives."

Several months later, the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), the Leader of the Opposition, announced:

"We are sophisticating the policy."

I appreciate that sophistication and the right hon. Gentleman are not often found in conjunction. It is certainly true that we have not seen much sophistication since.

The hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), who mysteriously appears to have vanished from the Chamber, announced in January of this year in the House:

"We are making very good progress with the work that we have undertaken to prepare our alternative . . . We have every confidence that in the coming months we shall reach a conclusion that we shall be able to bring forward with confidence."—[*Official Report*, 18 January 1990; Vol. 165, c. 438-39.]

I am delighted to bring that forward with confidence today.

The author of Labour party policy today, Mr. Peter Mandelson, the candidate for Hartlepool, announced on Radio Cleveland on 4 April that the next major policy statement by the Labour party would be on 23 or 24 May. He said that that statement would contain the party's fully worked out alternative to the poll tax. As that document is to be published tomorrow, I am giving the Labour party the first possible opportunity to put into legislative form the announcements that are about to be made.

In anticipation of this event, I wrote in these terms to the hon. Member for Dagenham on 9 May to announce that I was going to present my Bill today:

"Although I have my own ideas, I would be grateful for your assistance in drafting the details of the Bill . . . The Committee stage of the Bill will be an excellent opportunity for Labour to clarify its thoughts and test some of its ideas.

In view of the importance which you attach to replacing the poll tax as soon as possible with what you see as a fairer alternative, and the opportunity which I offer of a substantial backbench Tory rebellion if we can construct such an alternative, I am sure you will agree that this is an opportunity to render a service to the country and derive some kudos for the Labour party at a time whem its electoral fortunes appear to be on the slide. Can we meet as soon as possible to discuss tactics?"

I regret to say that difficult as it must be for Conservative Members to understand, this opportunity was refused.

As the House well knows, however, the Labour party in Scotland has produced its alternative; the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) announced in February that the party intended to return, in effect, to the rating system and that, instead of notional rental values, the tax would be based on the capital value of a house. This would bring advantages for many hard-pressed sections of the community. Time does not allow me to name too many of them so I shall name only one: chartered surveyors. In the flat condition of the property market today they are, of course, desperate for work. In a "if Labour wins power, the new system could bring an explosion of work through a one-off general revaluation followed by annual sample surveys.

Another aspect which should make professionals salivate is the almost unlimited potential for appeals",

and so on.

Of course, although advantages would undoubtedly accrue to certain members of the community, the great advantage of what is proposed by the Labour party is that no one need be worse off, because if a person is dissatisfied with the liability that he is likely to have on his house, he can always trade down. I believe that the hon. Member for Dagenham has already done that. Recently, in that estimable newspaper the *Daily Mail*, there was an article about the hon. Gentleman, who recently sold his delightful house in Oxfordshire in order to purchase a small flat near Moreton-in-Marsh.

I wondered why the hon. Gentleman had made this change. First and foremost, an instant's thought will tell the more sagacious Members of the House that Moreton-in-Marsh is represented by our right hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley) and we can well understand the eagerness with which the hon. Gentleman desires to become one of his constituents. But as I understand it, the hon. Gentleman's flat is in a very large 18th century country house called Northwick park—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] I can assure hon. Members that there is no ideological inconsistency in that, because the flat is in the former servants' quarters. It will undoubtedly reduce the hon. Gentleman's potential liability. Its third advantage is that it is further from Dagenham. I can well understand why the hon. Gentleman, proposing as he does a roof tax, wants to be as far away from his constituency as possible. As the average price of a house in Dagenham is £65,000, to raise the same revenue as the community charge, the roof tax there will have to be £10·90 per £1,000, so the average roof tax will be £711 compared with a community charge of £278. A single person would be £433 a year worse off than at present and couples would be £155 a year worse off.

Of course there are advantages to the roof tax. My hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) tells me that in Scotland many blocks of flats have been assigned a negative value by district valuers. One assumes that when the roof tax is introduced it will be perfectly symmetrical.

That means that people in hereditaments with a positive value will pay something while those who occupy properties that have a negative value will be paid to live there.

I hope that what I am about to say, Mr. Speaker, will not alarm you. You live in one of the most desirable of residences, and its capital value is very great. An open market valuation may well add several millions to it. You derive a reasonable salary for carrying out your onerous office, and I do not begrudge a single penny of it. We all hope that you will continue to occupy your residence, just as we all hope that there will not be a Labour Government after the next general election. I hope that we shall not find Mrs. Weatherill putting bed-and-breakfast notices outside your residence to supplement your income so that you can pay the roof tax.

It will be simple to avoid the roof tax in the same way as the window tax was avoided. Just as windows were bricked up, so the roof can be removed and that will considerably reduce the value of the property.

There are reasons why my Bill should be supported by hon. Members on both sides of the House. First, Labour Members should support their party policy by voting for me. Secondly, I should be supported by my hon. Friends who, by voting for the Bill, will show to electors all over the country and especially in London, the south-east and in areas where property values are greater than the average, how much they would lose by the election of a Labour Government. I call upon my right hon. and hon. Friends and Opposition Members to support me in the Lobby.

3.52 pm

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle) *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: Does the hon. Gentleman wish to oppose the Bill?

Mr. Leigh: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

I am surprised by my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton). As one would expect, he has presented his Bill with his customary wit and wisdom, but the measure is singularly ill-conceived. If I did not know my hon. Friend better, I would suspect that he had consulted the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), but surely that could not be the case.

My hon. Friend is a somewhat unlikely champion of socialism. Only this week, I espied him at a society wedding, wearing spats and carrying a cane with a silver top. I know that the vodka-and-tonic version of the Labour party to which the hon. Member for Dagenham belongs may not mind people wearing spats. Earlier this week, the Leader of the Opposition commented on the need for sartorial elegance by his spokesmen. Will they have to wear spats in the House in future?

Although my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton has presented his Bill in a mischievous tone, I must speak up on this entirely serious issue. I speak not just on behalf of my constituents but on behalf of those of the hon. Member for Dagenham. We have heard that people who occupy houses in Dagenham with an average value of £65,000 may well be as much as £400 worse off. This is therefore a serious issue for all our constituents.

I do not want to see the Bill proceed further, not least because my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton, knowing me as he does and as godfather to one of my children, knows that it will hit large families hard. My hon. Friend knows that children need roofs and that large families need large roofs. Only this week, I acquired another member of my family. The Bill is a personal dig at me, and that is another reason for opposing it. It must also be a dig at the hon. Member for Dagenham, who occupies a great mansion in Gloucestershire with sweeping valley roofs and great pitched gables. I understand that his roof tax could be as much as £3,000. Is this a dig at the hon. Member for Dagenham?

There are some serious points. I oppose the Bill because I want some answers. I see a Labour spokesman, the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) sitting on the Labour Front Bench. Let him answer a few simple questions. I will give way happily. I hope that he is listening carefully.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am afraid that the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) cannot answer the hon. Gentleman's questions, as this is a ten-minute Bill.

Mr. Leigh: How unfortunate. The hon. Gentleman can listen. I am sure that when that part-time Geordie and full-time London sophisticate Mr. Mandelson sophisticates the roof tax on Thursday, he will answer my questions. They have not been answered so far.

These questions can be put simply. First, how can it be fair to pay a tax based on property when a person's income can remain static while the capital value of his home goes up, with the result that, under the Bill's proposals, the roof tax will rise? Secondly, how can such a system be fair if one has no capital stake in one's home—for instance, when one is a tenant? Again, under the Bill's provisions, liability for roof tax still increases.

It is not surprising that this crab-like tax has crept forward, dodged around and come back. It is impossible to get a property tax like this to be fair. If we were to have a system based on income, there would be other problems. For example, Inland Revenue statistics are based not on a person's whereabouts, but on his job. How does one find out where a person is living and how much of his income should be redistributed around the authorities? Furthermore, London and the south-east have a concentration of high income tax payers. How does one redistribute that? It would make the rate support grant look like an easy game of draughts.

The roof tax is riddled through with inconsistencies and is fundamentally flawed. I am surprised at my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton. In the manner of Opposition spokesmen, he has proposed a policy without a price tag. He has given us no figures. We still have not heard from my hon. Friend or the Labour party whether this will be a tax on individuals or on households. Only the Labour party would produce a tax without saying who would be taxed, and we must be told.

All this is a diversion from what we should be discussing. The problem is not the nature of local government taxation but the fact that local government taxation is too high. People are paying too much. If Wandsworth and Westminster prove one thing, it is that Conservative councillors, in the next year or two, have rigorously to look at all their budgets and get bills down.

The roof tax is a mere smokescreen. It is confused and confusing. It is unexplained and inexplicable. I urge the House to reject the Bill with a substantial majority.

[Mr. Leigh]

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 19 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at commencement of public business):—

The House divided: Ayes Nil, Noes 119.

Division No. 223] **[3.58 pm**

AYES

Tellers for the Ayes: **Mr. Neil Hamilton and Mr. David Evans.**

NOES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beggs, Roy
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Bevan, David Gilroy
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Burns, Simon
Butcher, John
Butler, Chris
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Cartwright, John
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cryer, Bob
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dunn, Bob
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, John Dudley
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Franks, Cecil
Gale, Roger
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hayward, Robert
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hind, Kenneth
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Janman, Tim
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lightbown, David
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
McCrindle, Robert
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Arg'l & Bute)*
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Riddick, Graham
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roe, Mrs Marion
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, Sir William
Skinner, Dennis
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon J. D. *(S'ford)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thorne, Neil
Tracey, Richard
Trimble, William
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill *(T'side North)*
Wallace, James
Ward, John
Watts, John
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann

Tellers for the Noes: **Mr. Julian Brazier and Mr. David Nicholson.**

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You have said on numerous occasions that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is a distinguished former chairman of the Labour party. There may have been some confusion during the Division because the hon. Gentleman voted against the Roof Tax Bill. As he is a member of the national executive of the Labour party, whose policy this is, perhaps he ought to come to the Dispatch Box and explain what happened.

Mr. Speaker: Since the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has been attacked, I shall hear him.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The record ought to be put straight. The Labour party's national executive, under my chairmanship, never discussed the roof tax. During the course of the subsequent year, it never discussed the roof tax. During the last half hour, the Tories have played a clever and humorous game, but it was based on a figment of somebody's imagination. There has not been a Labour party roof tax, there will not be a roof tax and we killed it long before the Tories played their little game today.

Mr. Speaker: I do not think that the matter can be taken any further. It is not a matter for me.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) voted, as he explained, against the Roof Tax Bill. He must understand what the Roof Tax Bill is all about and what a roof tax involves. We do not. Perhaps you would give him leave to explain during the Adjournment (Spring) debate what it is all about.

Mr. Speaker: I thought that we heard what it is all about in some detail from the hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton).

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will be aware that decisions affecting Scotland are frequently made in Scotland by Scottish Members of Parliament meeting in Scotland. I understand that a roof tax decision affecting Scotland was decided upon in two minutes in Scotland. We are now facing the imposition of a roof tax that was decided upon in two minutes. However, we have just been told by a senior member of the Labour party's national executive that there will be no roof tax. Will the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) please do something about informing the people of Scotland?

Mr. Speaker: That is not a matter for me. Since, however, the hon. Gentleman mentioned Scotland, I should like him to know how much I enjoyed my visit to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland last weekend.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I seek your guidance. The House would like to know whether personal statements can be made today or tomorrow. The figment of imagination referred to by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is a figment of the imagination of Labour party Front-Bench spokesmen—the hon. Members for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) and for Dagenham (Mr. Gould). It would be helpful to them, to us and to the hon. Member for Bolsover if we could be told whether a personal statement is to be made.

Mr. Speaker: I cannot be held responsible for figments of the imagination until they happen and nothing has happened yet. We should get on with the spring Adjournment motion.

Adjournment (Spring)

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That this House, at its rising on Thursday 24th May, do adjourn until Tuesday 5th June.—*[Mr. Greg Knight.]*

4.13 pm

Sir Barney Hayhoe (Brentford and Isleworth): The Adjournment motion provides an opportunity for Back-Bench Members to raise matters of local, regional or national concern. The brief comments that I want to make about the growing problem of funding in the National Health Service apply at local, regional and national levels. I make these comments not in the context of the public expenditure round for 1991-92, upon which discussions are now taking place between Ministers and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, but in the context of the position this year. There is increasing pressure on the budgets of National Health Service hospitals.

Last autumn my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health told us how much he had achieved in obtaining extra resources for the Health Service for the financial year 1990-91. He equated those extra resources with a real growth in the Health Service. Since then, inflation has eroded—or more than eroded—that hoped-for and much-needed growth. Incidentally, the figures that the Government and Ministers produce on the Health Service, using the GDP deflator to demonstrate the effect of inflation, show a substantial growth in real terms in the finances available to the National Health Service. But one has to bear in mind that that global figure, although it is absolutely accurate, does not reveal the whole truth, which is that there has been a higher growth in family practitioner services, which are not cash limited, and a lower growth in hospital and community health services, which are.

The problems that we encounter in our constituencies are associated not with NHS family practitioner services but with hospital and community health services. Regional and district health authorities face severe financial constraints, and limits, reductions and cuts in patient services are necessary to balance the books for the current financial year. Ministers are more than usually insistent that the books are balanced this year to produce an even playing field next April for the introduction of the new financial regime for hospital services as a result of the National Health Service and Community Care Bill.

The Whitsun Adjournment gives Treasury and Health Ministers an opportunity to review the present difficulties. Ward and bed closures and restrictions on operating sessions are enormously inefficient ways of reducing expenditure within the Health Service because they reduce productivity and increase the unit costs of particular operations or services in an unacceptable way. They result in longer waiting times and waiting lists. Such actions are being taken within a Health Service where morale is certainly not at its best.

Only last weekend a group of nurses came to see me at one of my advice bureaux. Many of them were student nurses from my local hospital, the West Middlesex University hospital, complaining about the impact of the community charge. One can understand that. They feel that they are treated unfairly compared with RAF apprentices—that issue has been raised in the House. They are also concerned about what they describe as abominable conditions at their own nurses' home. The

[Sir Barney Hayhoe]

problem is not that the district health authority and the hospital authorities do not wish to improve those conditions; but that they cannot do so because they do not have the available financial resources. Capital schemes generally have been badly hit by falling land values, particularly in the Thames regions.

The case for an in-year increase of funds for National Health Service hospitals grows stronger. It needs urgent and sympathetic action during the Whitsun Adjournment by Treasury and Health Ministers. I hope that an appropriate in-year increase for National Health Service hospitals will be agreed.

4.19 pm

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): I want to make two important pleas to which I hope there will be a helpful response from the Government before the House rises for the spring recess. My first concern, which I know is shared by right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House, is to help people with haemophilia—and the recipients by transfusion of whole blood—who were contaminated with AIDS in the course of health care under the National Health Service. My plea is not only important but also compellingly urgent for the victims, many of them terminally ill, of this deeply appalling tragedy.

There have been three Adjournment debates over recent months about the issues raised by this tragedy. The most recent was initiated on 9 May by my hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey). He has in his constituency a couple with two sons, both of whom suffer from haemophilia, and who became HIV-positive after the injection of contaminated blood products. The elder of the two boys now has full-blown AIDS and is terminally ill. Anyone who has read my hon. Friend's speech must have been moved by the scale of the tragedy that has stricken his constituents, but, as my hon. Friend said, their case is but one of 1,200 in which HIV has been confirmed. Many of the victims have already died, and more live with the certain prospect of an early and most painful death in direct consequence of treatment they were given under the NHS.

I should like briefly to raise today the case of 16-year-old Gerald Hillary, whose father is a detective superintendent in Manchester. Gerald was given contaminated blood products in the course of NHS treatment and, in 1985, became HIV-positive. He developed AIDS and died last year. From being a bright and active teenager, he weighed just three stone before he died and could hardly speak or walk. His mother said:

"If love and prayer could have cured, he would have lived for ever. What hurts most now is that he need not have died."

She blames the Government and regards the ex-gratia payment of £20,000 for haemophilia sufferers with HIV as insulting. She says of the Government:

"They were responsible. They were warned in 1980 that blood products could be infected, but did nothing."

In a recent letter to me, David Watters, general secretary of the Haemophilia Society, recalled that, as Minister for the Disabled in the 1970s, I appointed the late and much respected Sir Alan Marre to undertake an inquiry into the outstanding issues in the Thalidomide dispute. In 1978, Sir Alan had recently retired from the office of ombudsman and his report to me, in August of that year, finally settled the dispute. David Watters, in his letter, asked me to press for a similar inquiry into the outstanding issues in the dispute now involving people with haemophilia—and the recipients by transfusion of whole blood—who became HIV-positive due to NHS treatment. He said:

"We feel confident that such a move could prove helpful. One of our main concerns for our people is that time costs money and, for those who do not qualify for legal aid, the cost of court proceedings is exorbitant. The indications are that a large number of those who do not qualify for legal aid are, in fact, now being forced to use their ex-gratia payment of £20,000 to fund their court actions. Meanwhile, the Government's own legal costs far outweigh those of seeking to resolve the issues more quickly by an independent inquiry of the kind you set up finally to end the Thalidomide dispute."

After receiving his letter, I wrote to the Prime Minister recalling my appointment of Sir Alan Marre and suggesting the appointment of Sir Anthony Barrowclough to undertake an inquiry into the outstanding issues in the current dispute over HIV caused by contaminated blood and blood products.

Sir Anthony Barrowclough, who retired only recently from the office of ombudsman, enjoys the respect of right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of this House and is of high standing in the legal profession. Again, as David Watters pointed out, the costs of reaching a settlement of the current dispute through him would be very much less for the Government than those of pursuing their case in the courts. It would certainly also lead to a quicker settlement. The earliest possible starting date for court proceedings is January 1991 and David Watters told me of the Haemophila Society's

"very great fear that the defence lawyers could be about to embark on a series of delaying tactics which could set back the date for the conclusion of proceedings very considerably."

In writing to the Prime Minister, I reminded her that many of the victims, including young Gerald Hillary, had already died and that many others have scant prospect of living to see a court settlement of their claims. Justice for them, if any, will be posthumous which, as I hope the House will agree, is not justice at all. In urging her to follow the precedent of Sir Alan Marre's inquiry into the outstanding issues in the Thalidomide dispute, I pressed for an early reply. That was on 3 May and I still await her response. To date, the only official comment about my letter, apart from a formal acknowledgement from 10 Downing Street, was that of the new Under-Secretary of State for Health, the hon. Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell), who replied to the Adjournment debate initiated by my hon. Friend for Kilmarnock and Loudoun on 9 May, and who said that I would be receiving "a considered reply" from the Prime Minister. The Under-Secretary also said that there was "not a precise parallel" between the Thalidomide case and the current dispute involving people with HIV due to NHS treatment.

Nowhere in my letter to the Prime Minister did I suggest that there was a "precise parallel" between the two disputes. But the outstanding issues in the Thalidomide case involved severely disabled people who were trying, mostly against impossible odds, to achieve justice through the courts, and so does the current dispute. In fact, the increasing number of deaths among people with AIDS due to contaminated blood and blood products makes the case for an out-of-court settlement all the more pressingly urgent. What Sir Alan Marre did, after I appointed him, was to resolve the outstanding issues in the Thalidomide dispute within five months. I believe that Sir Anthony

Barrowclough could do much the same in the dispute which is now dragging on to the anguish of everyone trying to help severely disabled people who face death from AIDS in consequence of medical treatment.

It is very widely hoped that the Prime Minister will reply soon to my suggestion. Its only purpose was to help people who are involved in a tragedy for which they are in no way responsible. There is still time for an oral statement from the Government on this most urgent and important issue before the House rises for the spring recess and I profoundly hope for a positive response from the Leader of the House when he winds up the debate tonight.

I hope he can help me also in regard to urgent action by the Government further to the debate I initiated on 30 March about childhood neuroblastoma, a form of cancer from which it is now very widely felt that far too many children die unnecessarily. In reply to my appeal to the Government on behalf of doctors and bereaved families alike, I was given a number of important assurances by the then Under-Secretary of State for Health. He agreed with me that any prospect of reducing the toll of suffering and death from this most dangerous form of childhood cancer deserved the most serious consideration and he said:

"That consideration is now in hand in relation to neuroblastoma."

I was told that my views would play an important part in his department's decision-making and he concluded:

"I hope that"

the right hon. Gentleman

"will welcome my assurances and pass them on to those whom he represents."

Since then I have had no further word from Health Ministers and there is much concern that the assurances I was given in the debate should now be seen to have been acted upon. I know that the Leader of the House will want to have urgent inquiries made about progress since the debate on 30 March before he replies this evening. In doing so, I ask him to have particular regard to the former Under-Secretary's words about me in column 870 of *Hansard* on 30 March, when he said:

"I am persuaded by his arguments and I shall instruct officials at the Department of Health to find the figures by searching through the death certificates of children who have died from cancer and to ascertain the most current information about those who have suffered from the disease. That will be at exceptional cost, but the right hon. Gentleman's arguments merit exceptional treatment. I hope that he will accept that assurance in the spirit in which it is offered. I shall be in touch with him about how we can inform the House."—[*Official Report, 30 March 1990; Vol. 170, c.874, 870.*]

That was but one of the assurances I was given on 30 March and I repeat that, since the debate, I have heard nothing more from the Department of Health. I am confident that the Leader of the House will want to respond to me on both of the issues I have raised as helpfully as he can.

4.31 pm

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): I draw to the attention of the House just one issue that requires the urgent attention of Her Majesty's Government. I refer to the future retirement age of males and females. This has always been an important matter, but it has become even more important in the light of the judgment of the European Court of Justice a few days ago. That judgment related to an entitlement under a private pension scheme, but I do not believe that there will be any consensus in the private occupational pension industry unless and until a lead is given by Her Majesty's Government about how they think that this important matter will develop.

I concede immediately that the Government are faced with a difficult problem which, understandably, they have sought to avoid for a considerable time. It is a difficult nettle to grasp because whatever the Government decide they are bound to upset one sex or the other. What to do about establishing a common state retirement age has become a matter of considerable public importance. Should everyone be enabled to retire at 60, as women can at present? Should everyone be required to wait until they are 65? Should there be a compromise at, say, 63? Those are all extremely difficult questions.

There are three avenues along which the Government might proceed. They could revive the idea that had the support of my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) when he was Secretary of State for Social Services, which would have led to a "decade of retirement", meaning that any individual—male or female—could choose to retire at any time between the ages of 60 and 70. However, if the individual chose to retire at an earlier age, it would be on a pro rata pension. That is by no means an ideal solution, but it is one way to proceed.

Another suggestion that has been made, and to which I have been attracted in the past, is for the retirement age of women to be moved up by perhaps half a year in each of five years, while the retirement age for men moves down by half a year during the same period. That would defer a judgment for that period, but would result in everyone's being entitled to retire at 62½.

The third possibility that Ministers could consider is an arbitrary declaration that in future everyone, including women, will have to wait until they are 65—or that everyone, including men, will be entitled to retire at 60. If that second course were adopted, it would require either a considerable amount of additional funding or a pension lower than people's present expectations.

Before the decision of the European Court of Justice, the Government faced a challenge on current pensions policy from the Equal Opportunities Commission. The EOC has been seeking a judicial review of that policy on the basis that it contravenes the treaty of Rome. That is a bold course of action. Until now, many people have seen the EOC as fighting—understandably—to remedy the inequities from which women have suffered; now, however, it will have to fight to resolve the inequities from which men have been suffering. The decision by the European Court of Justice will undoubtedly lend weight to the EOC's view.

I cannot deny that the Government face a difficult and controversial task. Were they to set the retirement age at 65 for women as well as men, they would undoubtedly upset many women who have planned and budgeted for retirement at an earlier age. However, allowing everyone to retire at 60 without any loss of pension rights would—according to the most recent estimate that I could obtain—require additional Government investment of £3·2 billion per year. Clearly, there is no easy way.

Unless and until the Government reach a decision about this controversial issue, they cannot expect decisions to be made about private pension schemes, which tend to follow central Government decisions, although occasionally they take the lead. When my right hon. and learned Friend replies, I hope that he will accept that, although

[Mr. Robert McCrindle]

there are no easy courses of action, in the light of last week's decision by the European Court a decision cannot continue to be postponed.

I have been an hon. Member for just under 20 years. On many occasions during that time—under both Labour and Conservative Governments—I have drawn attention to the need for a common retirement date. However, in 1990 we are still in the same position as when I entered the House in 1970. The Government must give a lead.

I am aware of the cost considerations, but in my judgment the matter merits the urgent attention of Ministers. At the very least, I submit that the time has arrived for the Government to produce a set of proposals that can be debated. Males and females—members of occupational pension schemes and those who rely on the state earnings-related pension scheme—could then have the opportunity of making their views known.

I hope that the Government will consider my remarks, and recognise that, whatever the possibilities for procrastination in the past, in the light of the recent judgment of the European Court of Justice the time has now come for us to make a decision.

4.39 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): As on previous occasions, the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle) has raised an important issue, but it is self-evident that it will not be solved by the time the House rises tomorrow. However, I agree with him that we cannot continue to put it off, and I hope that the Leader of the House will understand the message that some sort of machinery must be set in motion so that the Government can take the lead in a public debate on the vital issue of the respective retirement age for men and women.

There are two related issues to which I want to refer the Leader of the House before we vote on the motion for the spring Adjournment. On the first issue, I merely hope that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will pass on my comments to the Ministers involved, but I hope that he will give a positive response to the second issue. The first relates to certain specific matters connected with the poll tax and the second to the police pay regulations.

In the past few days we have been able to have a number of debates on the poll tax and the various revisions to it. Yesterday we had a good debate on a motion moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) and this afternoon we had an interesting and entertaining debate on the Bill introduced by the hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton). Of necessity those debates have focused on the alternatives to the poll tax from next year, on which we all have views. There is, however, an urgent need for the group of Ministers assembled to consider the poll tax to introduce ameliorations for the current year. In the case of Scotland, those improvements should be retrospective to cover the previous year. I want to place on record some important issues that have not emerged in previous debates.

I hope that the Ministers in the group considering the poll tax will decide not to take the Whitsun recess. It would be useful if they were locked in a room for the week and told to sort something out. If they did something to help people this year, they could then take a holiday. I hope that the Leader of the House will discuss that with his hon. Friends.

Areas of low rateable value and low incomes, which are hard hit because they are in the same borough or district as wealthy areas, must have some special provision made for them. Ministers at the Department of Environment are aware of the problem in my constituency at Castle Morpeth, as I have seen them about it. That area is a poor part of my constituency in terms of people's incomes and the rateable values, but people face a poll tax £100 higher per person than that in the neighbouring authorities because Castle Morpeth is part of an authority that contains a wealthy area with high rateable values.

Measures were taken in Wales to separate districts for the purpose of such calculations and that should be done in England. Some extra element of relief needs to be provided this year and the obvious mechanism for such further payments is the transitional relief system. I also hope that Ministers will consider increasing the rebate qualifying levels, as they obviously exclude many people whom we would recognise as being on low incomes.

There must be something wrong with the standard spending system, not least because so many authorities controlled by the Conservative party have been unable to get anywhere near the Government's proposed poll tax figure. It is no use the Prime Minister going on about Labour authorities when so many Conservative authorities are dissatisfied with the standard spending assessment figures.

I have also asked time and time again for urgent action to help those people who are excluded from transitional relief because they live in sheltered housing schemes. They previously paid their rates through housing associations, but now they have been told they are not entitled to transitional relief. Ministers have shown some interest in this problem, but they have not delivered the goods. They offer more and more excuses and say that they cannot do anything, much as they would like to. It is wrong that elderly people should be penalised in this way.

Anomalies have arisen over the interaction of the poll tax, the business rate and the standard community charge. One relates to bed-and-breakfast accommodation. In Scotland, the people providing that accommodation are not required to pay business rates in addition to the poll tax if they offer fewer than six beds—the same rule as applies to the fire regulations. In England, that exemption does not apply, and people will be expected to pay business rates and the poll tax for themselves and their spouses unless they restrict their bed-and-breakfast letting availability to 100 nights per year.

As a result of that exemption, the tourist season will be shortened, just at a time when the tourist boards are trying to extend it. Just as an injustice to Scotland was put right a few days after the Budget, that injustice to England should also be put right—bed-and-breakfast residences in England should be allowed the same exemptions from business rates as are available in Scotland. My constituency is on the border, and the different regime operating in the two countries means that the availability of bed-and-breakfast accommodation at various times of the year will be affected by the exemption and that the price charged for that accommodation will differ.

In most rural and holiday areas, the standard community charge is double the normal poll tax level. If it were not, the community charge would be a lot higher for

the normal resident charge payers. However, that standard charge bears heavily on those on low incomes who are obliged to live elsewhere, but who have purchased a retirement home in those areas. I refer particularly to vicars and ministers of religion, who live in vicarages or manses, from whom I have received many letters. They know that they must leave their present homes when their ministry comes to an end, and many make provisions for that time by purchasing an old farm cottage or something similar as a retirement home.

Those people are facing the severe pressure of having to pay a double poll tax in the area where they plan to retire, in addition to the poll tax that they must pay on their vicarages. A missionary and his wife who are working in Africa have no paid income. They live in a hut, and whatever food they require is provided by the local people. They have told me that they are required to pay a double poll tax on their retirement home, on which they are not entitled to any rebate. That problem also applies to some in Her Majesty's forces.

The categories of people subject to the double tax are already fixed—the present system affects those who live elsewhere because of their work. If councils simply reduced the multiplier for that category, all the wealthy second-home owners would benefit as well as those to whom I have referred. I believe that there should be a separate category for those who are required to live in provided accommodation as a condition of their work. That would come much closer to defining a category for whom the local authority could choose to set a lower multiplier. I hope that the Leader of the House will pass on that practical suggestion.

I hope that the Leader of the House will respond to the issue relating to police pay regulations as it directly affects his responsibilities. Today the Home Secretary is attending the Police Federation conference, where he is expected to get a pretty rough ride, not least because of the anger at the way in which those regulations have been treated. The police are angry because the Home Secretary has overturned the decision of arbitration. The Police (Amendment) Regulations 1990 were laid before the House on 9 March. They include changes in rent allowance and destroy the principle that a police officer can live in a rent and rate-free house or have the equivalent costs covered if he or she buys their own house. The matter was taken to arbitration and it is the result of that arbitration about which there is now controversy.

The police have pointed out that the special procedures for the arbitration mechanism are based upon the special circumstances of their work—the unsocial hours, the restrictions on their private lives, the exposure to danger, the need to be on call and the denial of the right to belong to a trade union. The arbitration mechanism exists because of those special circumstances and it has made certain proposals about the 1990 regulations. The staff side of the police negotiating board was taken to the police arbitration tribunal by the official side.

Tribunal decisions are binding on both sides of the negotiating board and are submitted to the Home Secretary. In the past the Home Office stated:

"The Secretaries of State would never withhold approval of an agreement save for reasons of grave national importance"

The Home Secretary has adduced no such reasons why he should not implement the decision of the arbitration machinery, which has attempted to deal with some of the severe problems presented.

Those problems are particularly acute for police officers in provided accommodation in rural areas. The police officers who live in their own houses will continue to receive the rates element in their allowance so long as they remain in their present homes. The level of that allowance is the subject of argument, but it will be provided.

Community police officers in rural areas, however, who must live in the village police house with the police office attached so that they can do their job will not receive that allowance. They have a much more limited temporary arrangement. By accepting the requirement of living in tied accommodation, they put themselves at a disadvantage anyway because they are not acquiring capital in a house of their own. They are to be subject to a further disadvantage in that they will have no rate allowance now that the poll tax has replaced the rates. These officers are almost invariably married, because it is normally regarded as essential to have a married man in such a post.

I quote a letter which I received from the wife of a police constable in my constituency:

"I am the wife of a Police Constable and the mother of three children. We live in a house provided by the Northumbria Police Force, and up until now we have lived rent and rates free.

This may seem to be very enviable, but I must point out that because we live in a house with an attached Police Office, we have lost a certain amount of privacy. My husband is virtually on 24 hours call, and does not claim overtime when he answers calls after normal working hours, or is disturbed in the middle of the night. . . . When he is at work I answer all calls and enquiries, which, as you can imagine, is a full-time job during the summer season, and for which I am unpaid. I therefore feel we deserve a rent and rate free house, which is part of the terms of my husband's contract . . .

The Police Federation's advice has been for us to purchase our own home, which we have done in the past, but the terms of my husband's current employment states that he lives in this police house. If we were to purchase our own home he could not work in this area."

If the regulations are not changed, we will be unable to recruit policemen to work in rural postings where they have to live in a police house, with a police office attached, which is the cornerstone of community policing in many rural areas. Hence the importance of the issue in rural areas, as well as in urban areas.

The regulations which implement the change are subject to annulment in either House. Prayers were duly tabled by the Leader of the Opposition on the English regulations and by my right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel) on the Scottish regulations. My hon. Friend the Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) asked on 19 April when the prayers would be debated. The Leader of the House replied:

"I understand that there is widespread interest in the police regulations and I shall seek through the usual channels to find an opportunity for them to be debated in due course."—[*Official Report*, 19 April 1990; Vol. 170, c. 1557-58.]

The prayers appeared in the provisional business of the House, which we were shown through the usual channels, some time ago, not very long after the Leader of House made that statement. Then they mysteriously disappeared, and have not reappeared.

My hon. Friend the Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) wrote to the Leader of the House and I have spoken to him myself about the matter. There has still been

[Mr. A. J. Beith]

no debate, nor has the matter been referred to a Committee. Who is preventing a debate? Is the Leader of the House going to tell me that the Official Opposition have told him that he must on no account allow a debate on their own prayer? I cannot believe that; no doubt the Leader of the House will tell us if that is so. Or is the Home Secretary leaning on the Leader of the House, saying, "For heaven's sake, don't let a debate take place on the police regulations because I am in enough trouble with the Police Federation as it is, and I do not want the regulations debated"? There must be some reason for the delay.

It is the law of the land that the regulations are subject to annulment in either House. In preventing that procedure from operating, the Leader of the House is showing scant concern for the very law and order about which his right hon. and learned Friend is no doubt talking to the Police Federation conference. There is a provision in law under which the regulations may be annulled. The Leader of the House is not allowing the law to operate. It is not good enough for him to say that the matter may be raised by any hon. Member on the Adjournment or on an Opposition Day. The provision was made so that that time would not have to be used on the Government's legislative programme, which is what this is.

A statutory procedure is being subverted. I contend that it is an abuse of the House for it to be so subverted. It is not the first time that it has happened. There is a litter of such motions, as there has been in previous Sessions. They all break the promise given when the procedures were introduced: that time would be found for debates on prayers. In this case, in the face of clear controversy, the Leader of the House must ensure that the matter is debated. I ask him to say later how he will make provision for that to happen.

4.53 pm

Mr. John Ward (Poole): Before the House rises for the spring recess, I wish to refer to policing in Dorset. I say right away that I am a great admirer of the Dorset police, who carry out their duties with immense skill under their chief constable, Mr. Brian Weight.

Dorset, and especially east Dorset, has developed rapidly over recent years and the chief constable, with the full support of the police committee, has applied frequently for additional officers to be authorised by the Home Office to help him meet the increased requirement. Invariably Dorset is granted fewer additional officers than we think we need and the shortfall has had to be compensated for in other ways. There is a limit to what increased efficiency and the increased use of civilians can do, but the chief constable has made the maximum possible use of both options.

Every police force has additional burdens from time to time, but the cost of £2 million required to provide the necessary security at the forthcoming Conservative party conference does not make balancing the books any easier. In spite of the efforts of the local police, overall crime increased by 11·2 per cent. in Dorset in 1989. Although the detection rate has also increased and Dorset police have been among the leaders in the fight against drug abuse, it is an uphill struggle.

I hope I have shown that we are fully utilising the resources we have, and that we can make a good case for additional resources. Above all, we must retain the good officers we already have.

That brings me to the main point. As hon. Members will know—indeed the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) has just referred to it—there has been some discussion and much correspondence about the Home Secretary's decision to reject the findings of the police arbitration tribunal this year. I do not question his right to do that, although I question the wisdom of the decision and the way that it has been implemented. The Home Secretary has responded to our criticism by making alterations which go some way towards making the settlement fairer; hon. Members will be familiar with the changes.

What I wish to highlight today is a great injustice which remains for Dorset police officers. Until now, some police forces have had their rent allowance uprated in even years, and some in odd years. Under the Home Secretary's present plans, some officers, including those in Dorset, will receive an allowance based on an uprating which took place on 1 April 1988, while others will receive an allowance based on an uprating which took place a year later. The arbitration tribunal recommended that there should be an uprating of the 1988 allowance under the old system of calculation, but the Home Secretary has said that the additional expenditure cannot be justified.

In spite of the most recent concessions by the Home Secretary, the effect will be that the Dorset police officer, who is currently receiving £1,333 per annum less than his colleagues in Hampshire, will receive a minimum of £856 per annum less than his Hampshire counterpart. I do not make too much of the London Metropolitan police allowance except to say that the London policeman will receive £2,863 more than the Dorset policeman. We all accept the additional risks often faced by the Metropolitan police, but I cannot accept that police in Hampshire, doing precisely the same job as police in Dorset and separated by an artificial line on a map, are worth over £800 per annum more in allowances.

During the recent disturbances caused by Leeds United football supporters in Bournemouth, we saw forces from other areas, including Hampshire and London, working shoulder to shoulder with Dorset police, carrying out the same duties, yet receiving different rates of allowances. It goes without saying that Dorset police are available to lend assistance to their colleagues in other police forces should the need arise. I am not asking for special treatment for Dorset police officers, but simply for fair and equal treatment for those who carry out the same job as their colleagues in other forces but who happen to live or work in the wrong area when it comes to allowances.

Obviously, the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed did not know that today, during his address to the Police Federation, the Home Secretary said that there would be a debate in the House after the recess. We look forward to that. I hope that I have said enough to show that we both respect and like our police in Dorset. We need to retain the good and, yes, ambitious men who serve us. To do that we need to see fair play. Again I ask that the Home Secretary should reconsider the injustice of the present position and come back to the House, when we have the debate, with an arrangement which will right the injustice which I have illustrated today.

4.59 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): Before the House rises I want to appeal to the Leader of the House on behalf of the many thousands of young miners who are to lose their jobs over the next three years. The Leader of the House will be aware of the announcement by Sir Robert Haslam this week that up to 7,000 miners can expect to have to leave the industry during the next three years.

The House will be aware that, since 1984, there has been a massive rundown of the mining industry. There are now more than 1,000 men fewer in the mining industry than there were in 1984. The present position is more serious than it has been hitherto, because the average age of the work force in the mining industry is 33. If those young men find themselves out of work and the Government continue with their policy of providing very little aid to the mining communities, there will be no hope of those young men finding alternative employment.

I am sure that we are all aware that one of the main reasons for holding down the mining industry was the Government's feeling towards the miners' leadership and some of the miners. As I perceive it, the position now is a little different. I believe that British Coal's decision arose from the privatisation of the electricity industry, and has meant that, due to lack of investment, British power stations have not been fitted with the flue gas desulphurisation plants required to limit CO_2 emissions from them. If, like many of our European colleagues, we had undertaken investment during the past few years, we would be able to meet the EC directive on emissions from power stations by 1993. Unfortunately, because such investment has not taken place, that is no longer possible.

The only way that British Coal and the new private electricity companies can meet that demand is with low-sulphur coal. There is insufficient low-sulphur coal mined in this country to meet the demand. Therefore, as the executive directors of National Power and PowerGen told the Select Committee on Energy a few days ago, their judgments will be made on a purely commercial basis, even if British Coal could meet the demand. They told the Committee that British Coal would have to reduce their prices by up to £6 or £7 a tonne less than imported low-sulphurised coal if it was to stay in the market. From my knowledge of the mining industry, I believe that that is an impossible task.

We are having further to run down our mining industry and import more coal. That policy is purely and simply based on commercial judgment in the short term. If that policy is to continue and our pits are run down so rapidly —bearing in mind the fact that Sir Robert Haslam said that 7,000 would have to leave the industry, and I believe that figure could be doubled if one takes into account the spin-off jobs outside the mining industry—when and if the Government, of whatever political persuasion, decide that they might invest in the desulphurisation plants, this country will not have the coal-mining capacity to feed them. Therefore, we shall still continue to rely on imports.

I am sure that I do not need to tell the Leader of the House or any other hon. Member what will happen to the so-called cheap coal from abroad once we cannot meet our demands. It will no longer be cheap, and we shall have to continue to import low-sulphurised coal when we could solve the problem ourselves.

It is worth noting that, if we had provided the plant —and if we do so in the future—it would limit the emission of CO_2 by 90 per cent. Low-sulphurised coal will limit that emission by only 50 per cent. Therefore, if we are serious about attacking the problem of acid rain, our efforts should be to provide the necessary plant to the power stations, which can be fed by British Coal. I would have thought that that was common sense. To sterilise thousands and millions of tonnes of coal in this country and leave ourselves open to competition from abroad does not seem sound market judgment over the medium and longer term.

However, if the Government, National Power and PowerGen are to continue with their policy of relying on imports, we must ask what will happen to the people who are thrown out of work in the mining industry. That is the appeal I want to make to the Leader of the House this evening. As mining communities have been wiped out— my own in the Wakefield, Pontefract and Castleford travel-to-work area has lost 11,000 mining jobs since 1984 —they have received no assistance from Government to try to attract alternative employment.

Although that has been bad enough, there was previously a cushion because the vast majority of men have been 50 or over and have received weekly payments to cushion the blow of losing their jobs. There is now a completely different ball game. I have already told the House that the average age of the work force is 33, and they receive no weekly payments or cushion.

If the Government do not intend to provide the plant to use British coal, but intend to run down the industry, I believe that, by the mid and late 1990s, the work force of the mining industry could be down to 10,000, whatever Sir Robert Haslam says. He says that people who talk in such terms—I hope that he does not mean me—are Jeremiahs. I regret that unfortunately, since 1984, the prediction of the Jeremiahs to whom he referred have been right and Sir Robert's estimates have been wrong.

I hope that the Leader of the House will persuade his colleagues in government that, if the jobs have to go—I believe that it would be a retrograde step for this country —there is an obligation on the Government to plan and assist those areas to attract industry to provide alternative work for the young miners who will be thrown out of their jobs. Surely that is the least that a Government can do, and that is my appeal to the Leader of the House tonight. Will he give serious consideration to that issue if the mining industry is to be run down to the extent that he suggests?

5.9 pm

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): The hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) has raised an extremely important point and he will have been heard sympathetically by hon. Members on both sides of the House. Those of us who represent Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire understand the problem that he describes, and we hope that he will have a sympathetic response later from my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House.

I wish to speak about two matters, the first of which concerns the relationships between church and state, which need urgent debate in the House. I shall not say very much about this because, by sheer luck, for the first time in 16 years I drew a place in the ballot this afternoon. Unfortunately, it was second place, but if the hon.

[Mr. Michael Latham]

Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) has a short debate we shall be able to get on with discussing the problems of church and state. I shall table a motion which will express strong and radical views, but I suspect that the Government Whips will then make sure the debate on the motion tabled by the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch will go on all afternoon.

I hope that when those who are charged with picking the new Archbishop of Canterbury start their work they will realise that many people in this House and in the country want a man who preaches well, who believes in orthodox doctrine—

Mr. John M. Taylor (Solihull): And in God.

Mr. Latham: And in God, as my hon. Friend says. They want a man who will speak up for the traditional values and creeds of the Church of England—

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): And is a Tory.

Mr. Latham: I disagree with my hon. Friend. The man's politics are irrelevant—what matters is that he preaches strongly and effectively. I believe that many people in the church are hoping for the choice of such a man.

I now turn to a wholly different matter—the Health Service in my constituency. The general subject of the Health Service was discussed strongly by my right hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Sir B. Hayhoe) earlier this afternoon. There is a difficulty in Leicestershire similar to that which he described in his area.

Leicestershire health authority faces the need to make cuts of £6 million this year to balance its budget by the end of the financial year. That is producing some unsatisfactory and worrying proposals, one of which is to close the Vale of Catmose hospital at Oakham in my constituency. I do not want to bore the House with too much detail, but that 100-year-old hospital is undoubtedly scheduled for closure at some stage, and Leicestershire health authority had proposed to close it in the middle of this decade.

Last year, to the great annoyance of my constituents and myself, the authority insisted on closing the maternity unit at the Rutland Memorial hospital—also in Oakham—as part of last year's round of cuts in the Health Service. This year, however, it promised us that the way in which it would solve the problem of the Vale of Catmose hospital would indeed be to close it, but that the site would be sold off only after a new major rebuilding programme had taken place at the other hospital, the Rutland Memorial, which would cost more than £1 million. That compromise, though regretted by many of my constituents, was regarded as reasonable in the circumstances. It is certainly generally accepted that the Vale of Catmose hospital will eventually have to close.

The latest proposal, which comes as a result of the economies required by Trent regional health authority, is that the Vale of Catmose hospital should be closed as quickly as possible, and the proposed rebuilding of Rutland Memorial hospital has been postponed indefinitely. I must tell the Leader of the House what I told the Secretary of State for Health when I and Leicestershire colleagues from both parties saw him recently—that this is an unsatisfactory state of affairs. It arises almost entirely from the collapse of the property market and hence the difficulty for Leicestershire health authority in disposing of surplus land. The authority had 600 acres of land for disposal, of which about 150 were of high residential development potential, and there is no doubt that the land can eventually be sold, but in the present bad state of the property market it cannot be sold for a figure that the district valuer would find acceptable.

The authority has therefore got into the present difficulties, but any commercial company in the same position would not immediately close down its operations—it would increase its borrowing. At our meeting with the Secretary of State for Health, my colleagues and I proposed that Leicestershire should be allowed to borrow some money to tide it over the present difficulties. The money could then be repaid next year when, I hope, the property market will have picked up. It is not a tremendously radical proposal—exactly such borrowing took place in the last financial year when Leicestershire health authority was allowed by Trent regional health authority to do so.

I am sorry to say that the Secretary of State for Health gave us a most disappointing reception when we went to see him. He said bluntly that Leicestershire health authority must live within its means, that he would not even look at the matter again and that he would not, as he put it, second-guess the health authority. That was a very disappointing reply.

It was reported in the local paper the other day that the new Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health—my hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell), whom I warmly welcome to his new position and who I am sure will do his job well—was quoted as saying that the Government

"are looking at ways to ease the problems for the capital growth, some of it this year and in future years as well."

I have discussed that remark briefly with my hon. Friend. He may well not have been accurately quoted, and he may have been trying to say that the Goverment have no intention of arranging the kind of flexibility between capital and current spending that I want and may instead be looking into the problem of frustrated land sales.

It is essential that the Government do not allow the National Health Service to get into another cash crisis. They got into terrible political and social trouble two years ago when a similar problem arose. People in my constituency, especially those in rural areas, are not prepared to put up with a Health Service which entails having to drive 30 or 40 miles to Leicester for hospital treatment. They expect cottage hospitals in market towns such as Oakham and Melton Mowbray to be kept open and to offer a wide range of services. So long as I am in this House, which is only until the next general election, I shall defend as strongly as I can their right to those local services, and I look to my right hon. and learned Friend for a positive response.

5.16 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I want to take this opportunity to urge the Leader of the House not to allow the House to go into recess until we have debated three items. I shall be as brief as I can because several other hon. Members want to speak too——

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): That's enough, Bob.

Mr. Cryer: I am surprised that my hon. Friend has interjected because he has raised my first item on the Floor of the House.

I refer to Bradford under Labour control. Labour had a massive win at the last local elections, swept Pickles and his cronies from office and dumped them in the garbage can of history where they so rightly belong. The subject was raised at Question Time in the context of the Labour-controlled council's discussion of priorities. The Minister who holds the poisoned chalice of the poll tax, the hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo), said in reply to an intervention by a Tory Member that he had contacted the leader of the dwindling number of Tories on Bradford council—*the discredited Eric Pickles.*

What right has the Minister, in an official capacity, to contact the person who led the defeated group, who is no longer in office and who has been shown that the people of Bradford no longer want him as part of their administration? If Ministers have contacts to make with Bradford, they should surely be with the leader of the council or with the chairman of the appropriate committee on the council. Any contacts must be with the elected majority group; otherwise, they are a deliberate snub to the massive majority in Bradford who got rid of the Tory majority and substituted a Labour majority. I am staggered that a Minister could say in the Chamber that he had contacted the discredited minority leader of Bradford in an official capacity.

If the Minister wants to go to Bradford as a Tory Member and try whistling in the wind for a few Tory voters, he is entitled to do that, but as a member of the Government he must perforce negotiate with the elected majority. I know that the Government want to get rid of local democracy and to trample the rights of local government into the dirt, but they have not managed to do that.

The people of Bradford have given a loud and clear message that they want a Labour-controlled council and Ministers must conduct negotiations with that council. The leadership on Bradford council has made it clear that by law the council must deliver certain services. Those services will not be prejudiced in any way, except of course through cuts by central Government. It is up to central Government to provide the money so that Bradford council under Labour control can deliver the services that are required by law.

Because of the difficulties created by inheriting a Conservative budget, the council will inevitably discuss priorities and will try to reverse the cuts which Pickles and his cronies introduced in Bradford. The sacking of teachers and other local authority workers was in the pipeline. Bradford council wants to improve and maintain services and to restore education and housing after the ravages of Conservative control. I am surprised that any Minister can defy the democratic will of the people of Bradford, and I shall keep a close eye on the way in which the Government behave. I expect them to have negotiations in good faith with the Labour majority in Bradford and I hope that they will negotiate better poll tax support grants for the future.

Secondly, I draw to the attention of the Leader of the House some evidence that was published today by the Select Committee on Members' Interests. It is the minutes of evidence on parliamentary lobbying. One of the lobbying organisations in the study is a firm called Ian Greer Associates. Before I was on that Committee, Ian Greer gave evidence to the effect that he had nothing to do with Members of Parliament, that he did not pay them and that he kept them at arm's length. The evidence states:

"You are completely dissociated from them?

A. That is correct."

Subsequently, Mr. Andrew Roth produced some interesting evidence that, far from being dissociated as Mr. Greer claimed, five hon. Members introduced business to Mr. Greer and obtained a commission. Apparently only one of the five took the trouble to declare his interest in the matter. Several large sums are likely to be involved. For example, one of the accounts was with British Airways. We can assume that the amount involved is perhaps several hundred thousands a year. A commission of 5 per cent. of that is big money, and it was alleged that the commission was greater than 5 per cent.

A Select Committee was dealing with this matter, which means that it is an important constitutional issue. Select Committees have the power to call for persons and papers, and they expect people to give evidence in good faith. Mr. Greer told the Committee that he could not name the hon. Members to whom he had paid the money. He said that it was not his responsibility, and even said that he did not have any responsibility for advising them to register their interests. In reply to a question from me, Mr. Greer agreed that with hindsight he might in future advise hon. Members to register.

People who are called before a Select Committee should give the fullest possible evidence and should not deny information about payments that they have made to hon. Members. I spoke earlier about local authority interests. If payments had been made to members of a council, the House would have been outraged and would immediately have called for disclosure of those payments.

I hope that the Leader of the House can arrange for an early debate or that he will take into account the published evidence and issue a statement suggesting that all hon. Members should register all their interests, and that, if four hon. Members have omitted to do so, they should rectify that omission as quickly as possible. I am sure that you will agree, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it is important for hon. Members to follow the rules of the House. Those rules, set out in the reports of 1974-75, say that hon. Members should declare interests that affect their conduct as Members of Parliament or that might be thought to affect their conduct. That category exactly fits the situation that I have described.

I shall now continue the argument that I started in an Adjournment debate, which is that we should not go into recess until we have had a full-scale debate on the sell-off by the Government of the skill centres. I assure the House that this issue will not go away. I remind the House that the Government decided to sell 60 skill centres, asked for bids and issued a document through Deloitte Haskins and Sells. The document was handed over on the understanding that it was secret and had to be handed back.

If the Government invited bids for a business and then secretly informed one bidder that £11 million was to be made available, I am sure that Conservative Members would regard that as completely unfair. They would regard it as even more unfair if they learned that the three people who made the successful bid and received the £11 million were the three senior civil servants who were in charge of the skill centres in the first place. Moreover, the Minister

[Mr. Cryer]

has refused to reveal the price received for the sale of 27 skill centres to Astra Training Services, an organisation produced by the three civil servants.

There is a cloak of secrecy. Time and again, the Minister produced bland platitudes and he will not say how much taxpayers' land has been sold. He will not confirm that no other bidder received the £11 million, although the other bidders, several of whom I have contacted, have told me that they had received no information about the £11 million. The Motor Traders Training Association approached the Government and asked if any money was available to carry on training but it was told that no money was available. If the association was told that by a civil servant who was associated with the project, it looks not just casual or incompetent, but sinister.

The story from the bidders is that, when they went to the skill centres, they were not allowed to get the full information that they needed to make their bids. When they asked the Government and civil servants for information about trade union agreements—it was a condition of the sale that such agreements should be honoured—they were not given that information. If that is the case—and allegations have been made to me by bidders, none of whom was told about the £11 million, so all have a common cause of concern—it is more than incompetence. It is the deliberate obstruction of bids so that insider dealers, the civil servants, could purchase the skill centres. This is a matter of scandalous proportions.

The total value of the centres is about £130 million, including land and the assets on it. Those have been virtually given away, together with £11 million of taxpayers' money, and no prices have been revealed for the sale. In another case, £2 million has been handed to a training consortium, again without any acknowledgement of the arrangements that were involved. These matters must come before the House as soon as possible, so that we can have a full investigation and, hopefully, some remedial action. It is a seedy rip-off of the taxpayers by a clique of civil servants operating from the inside.

5.49 pm

Mr. Chris Butler (Warrington, South): I am returning to the subject of bovine spongiform encephalopathy, not only because I failed to catch the eye of Madam Deputy Speaker on Monday but because I believe that it is important for the Government to restore public credibility before and during the recess and because the public need the Government to apply as much reassurance, frankness and caution as possible in this matter. BSE is leading people to think deeply about recycling animal proteins —sometimes even diseased animal proteins—back into the animal food chain, particularly for those animals which are naturally herbivores. This has already led to serious animal health problems. The drive for ever more efficient and cost effective ways to produce food has led to hidden costs, as my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) will attest.

We think—we do not know—that BSE is caused by the same agent as scrapie. If it is, there may be parallels with the vertical transmission that we find in scrapie. The Southwood report referred to the placenta as "highly infectious" so it would not be surprising to find that BSE is vertically transmissible. If BSE is the same agent as scrapie, then this organism has passed not only the species barrier but the genus barrier. It has jumped a whole sub-family. That makes me feel very uneasy.

The Tyrrell intermediate consultation committee said:

"Experience with scrapie suggests that many species may be susceptible to BSE."

Therefore, I was disturbed when I received a written answer that said:

"there is no scientific reason why the offals should not be incorporated into feedstuffs for non-ruminant animals. It is up to countries importing protein material from the United Kingdom to determine the conditions under which such imports may take place in the full knowledge they have about the disease and its likely cause."—[*Official Report*, 13 February 1990; Vol. 167, c. *197*.]

We have no assurance that this disease may pass to animals other than ruminants. It could be that their lifespans are too short for them to develop the disease and show clinical signs. The Tyrrell committee said that pigs and chickens "may" act as sources of infection for man. It would be far better to incinerate all offal, so that the sub-virus reaches a dead end and is not passed around in an incestuous food chain, perhaps ending up on man's dinner plate.

It shows a rather nonchalant attitude towards other countries, some of them Third-world countries, to say that they can take some of these tainted materials—it is up to them, it is their risk, they take it in full knowledge. That is rather like the debates that we had about sending waste to the Third world. We should not pass around these materials to other countries and we certainly should not try to make a profit out of them abroad when we do not make a profit out of them in this country. We know that these materials are dangerous, and we do not have full knowledge of what they may cause. Other countries may not have such developed systems of governance or developed veterinary systems, and we should not put them to the test in this way.

We know that spongiform encephalopathies are transmissible to man and that in man they may take up to 30 years to develop. Doctor H. C. Grant, MD, FRCP, a neuropathologist at the Charing Cross hospital, has put forward his expert view:

"The Southwood report claims that the risk of humans catching the disease is 'remote', but the truth is that we do not know if it is remote. Experts doubtless thought the likelihood of cattle catching the disease was remote when they first fed scrapie-infected material to cattle in 1981."

The Southwood report said:

"It may be a decade or more before complete reassurance can be given."

If we cannot give complete reassurance, we should approach the matter with the utmost caution. I welcome the Government's decision to review the method of stripping out brains and spinal material from carcases, because it could be that the splatter of this nervous material on to red meat will defy the purpose of performing the operation. There may be better ways to do it.

In the debate on whether carcases should be buried or burnt, there should be a preference for burning, because we know that that organism is highly resistant and can be destroyed only by burning or powerful corrosive acids. I noted that, in a reply to a question from the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies), who unfortunately is not here today, my hon. Friend the Minister said:

"Spongiform encephalopathies have never been recorded in domestic pets. Moreover, the industry's policy is not to use these materials. There is thus no need for regulatory action." —[*Official Report*, 2 February 1990; Vol. 166, c. *409*.]

On 14 February, in the First Standing Committee on European Documents, I called for a legislative ban on these materials being recycled into the pet food chain. There are responsible operators who will keep this material out of the petfood chain, but that does not allow for the irresponsible operators, who may be out to make a quick profit from recycling these materials.

The experts who had never recorded the transfer of spongiform encephalopathies have now recorded the transfer of them to domestic pets, strengthening my argument that there should be legislative action on this point. The Tyrrell committee called in June 1989 for a random survey of cattle brains at the point of slaughter. The Government should give this more urgency than that afforded to it by the committee. Not only would such a survey give a better fix on the incidence of this disease: it might give greater reassurance to the public that they are not receiving meat that has already been infected and that has developed the disease but is not yet showing clinical signs of it. I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend agrees that it would not be right for humans to be fed such meat. Just because this policy has been espoused by the Labour party does not mean that it should not be adopted.

5.37 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Given his concluding remarks, the hon. Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler) should not be surprised when I say that my hon. Friends and I much agree with most of the points in his speech.

It would be useful, before we went into the recess, for the House to receive details about the appointment of the Secretary of State for Energy as the co-ordinator of Government information. The media were given the news by No. 10 Downing street, but the House was not. Can we table questions about this aspect of Government activity? If not, why not? Ministers are supposed to be accountable to the House. When I raised this matter yesterday on a point of order, Mr. Speaker said that he understood that it was an unofficial arrangement. What does that mean?

Why did the job go to the Secretary of State for Energy? Why did it not go to the most natural person—the Leader of the House? He always maintains that he has a close working arrangement with the Prime Minister, even if they meet only weekly at meetings and apparently can hardly bear to say much to each other. Surely the responsibilities of the Leader of the House are not so heavy that he could not take on these added responsibilities for co-ordinating information.

If the Leader of the House is out of the picture, why did not the appointment go to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster? As we all know, he is the current chairman of the Conservative party and, unlike his immediate predecessor, the present Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, is keen on a high-level profile. I should have thought that the job of co-ordinating Government information, or lying, whatever one wants to call it, was right up that right hon. Gentleman's street. Why was not the job given to him? Though after the farce of yesterday's "summer offensive," which came unstuck within a matter of hours, perhaps the Prime Minister was not altogether wrong, I must admit, in coming to the conclusion that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster was not quite the right person for the job.

It appears that the political columnist of *The Independent* was told yesterday by an admirer of the Secretary of State for Energy, who has been given the job of co-ordinating Government information, that the latter has no ambitions, no thoughts of his own—that we can readily accept—and that his one desire and purpose in life is to anticipate the Prime Minister's every wish. The columnist added that this means that the Prime Minister has put herself in charge of winning the next general election. It is not for me to say whether that is good news for Tory Members.

In an article in today's *Guardian* the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow)—we can all agree that the hon. Gentleman is certainly no wet, and is as Stalinist a right-wing Tory as one could find—said that the chairman of the Tory party has stated loyally that we must not drop the pilot. The hon. Gentleman comments:

"But he would, wouldn't he?"

In the same article the hon. Gentleman tells us that the "topic of the Tory leadership is never far from Tory MPs conversation—paternalist or Thatcherite, Backbencher, or junior Minister."

The hon. Gentleman adds:

"Sticking to the pilot we have got may not, however, provide a safe passage now that we are moving into new and uncharted waters."

The hon. Gentleman then speculates on the change of leadership. Has he suddenly become an admirer of the pretender to the present throne, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine)?

There has been much in the press in the past two or three days of the possibility that there will be a general election in June 1991. It seems that the press has been fed a good deal of information that it could be next June. We shall see in due course. Downing street has been extremely busy I believe feeding the press with the possible date of next June to avoid a leadership election this autumn. If Tory Members are persuaded that the period before the next general election is limited, that they should not rock the boat and that the election will be as early as June 1991, they may be less willing to participate in a leadership campaign unlike last year.

As I said, I think that we are entitled to answers. We are entitled to know the precise duties and further responsibilities of the Secretary of State for Energy. We are also entitled to know whether he will answer our questions on the Floor of the House relating to Government information matters following our opportunity to table them. These are matters of concern that should be dealt with by the Leader of the House when he replies.

5.44 pm

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): Having sat on the Conservative Benches for about 11 years, I have heard several of the speeches of the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), but never have I heard such nonsense and cynicism expressed in the Chamber as that which I so recently heard. The hon. Gentleman must begin to understand, even at his rather mature age and with his long experience in this place, that it will not do to present to the House spurious information which is of no interest to my right hon. and hon. Friends and of even less interest,

[Mr. John Carlisle]

if that is possible, to his own right hon. and hon. Friends. The hon. Gentleman is an embarrassment to his constituents and to his party.

I am about to disappoint the hon. Member for Walsall, North even more. He probably expected my few remarks to be related to South Africa, which is one of our favourite topics. I think that my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House, with his vast experience of foreign affairs during his distinguished time as Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, would also show an interest in South Africa. However, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister having correctly said yesterday that sanctions are no longer an issue and that the Government consider them to be irrelevant after the excellent and successful meeting with President de Klerk in South Africa, I feel that it is appropriate at this stage to rest my case.

I wish to bring to the attention of the House before the recess a matter which is attendant to a subject that the House has been discussing during the past few days in various degrees of hilarity and seriousness—local government expenditure. I shall refer especially to local expenditure in Bedfordshire and in Luton. Anyone from outside this place who had visited it in the past 24 hours might have gone away feeling somewhat confused as to the Opposition's position. Yesterday, the Social Democrats fantasised about a local income tax. I believe that one of their speakers claimed that it would counteract the community charge that the Government have introduced, which he claimed has intruded on people's private lives. If anything intruded on private lives, it would surely be town hall bureaucrats investigating our constituents' Inland Revenue affairs. Today the hilarity was produced by my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton), who dealt admirably with the roof tax on which the Labour party seems to be hooked, although not even that is certain in these uncertain times for that party. The polls show that it is slipping further towards the level of popularity of the Conservative party. It seems that the Labour party is entirely confused as to what its policy should be.

What is not confusing to those of us in the real world is that the wrath which has been heaped upon my right hon. and hon. Friends in the past few months has not been the result of the Government's actions. Virtually all of it has been the result of high-spending local authorities, especially those controlled by the Labour party. In Bedfordshire, the Labour and Liberal hung councils took the opportunity, as they did in 1974, to impose upon the unwitting community charge payers—previously it was the ratepayers—massive increases in spending without any justification, knowing that they would not have to face the brunt of the anger that that would generate.

It is interesting that now that community charge bills have landed on doorsteps and people are beginning to pay—and those who thought that they would not enjoy rebates are enjoying them—the tone of correspondence has changed dramatically to my mind and in my experience. People are beginning to realise that it is not the Government's fault that in Bedfordshire, and in my constituency, there are community charge bills of more than £400 per person. They are beginning to understand that their bills are the result of the reckless spending of county authorities, and in some instances borough authorities, which have decided to spend other people's money without any thought of where further moneys will come from.

The position in Bedfordshire is especially sad. Regrettably, it has always been a county of high-spending authorities. When the Conservative party lost control of the county council, good housekeeper that it was, people in monkey suits in Bedford county hall took control. They have taken no account of the ability of community charge payers, or of residents generally, to pay. To my mind, there is no doubt as to exactly where the blame lies. Over the years, the Labour-Liberal-controlled council has almost exceeded its wildest dreams in its excesses and in the burdens that it has placed upon us.

For example, some years ago, and following the spending of about £50,000, we became a nuclear-free zone. I am not sure whether the Bedfordshire ratepayers felt any better for that, but we were sore that such a sum was spent on their behalf changing signs. There was an attempt to twin with a black township in South Africa. That may seem creditable to Labour Members, but a great deal of money was spent on a political exercise which had no bearing on the well-being of the unfortunate citizens of the township or on the well-being of the ratepayers whom the authority purported to represent. Many a long hour in the council chamber has been spent debating freedom for Nicaragua, tropical rain forests, whether the BBC should move from Cambridge to Norwich——

Mr. Tony Banks: We should all be interested in rain forests.

Mr. Carlisle: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the rain forests are important, but the council is prepared to spend time and money debating subjects which have little or nothing to do with the needs of the people whom it purports to represent. To cap it all, in its expenditure plans for 1990-91—which were vigorously opposed by the Conservative group on the county council—it has proposed and brought in a massive increase in spending, which is totally unjustified. The justification for such spending is questionable. That is not just my opinion, as someone with a political axe to grind, but the opinion of the independent Audit Commission, which has made extensive surveys on local authorities' financing and budgeting in the past, as many hon. Members will know.

The Audit Commission has consistently found that since Bedfordshire county council passed into Labour and Liberal control it has been a high-spending council and that in a majority of cases spending is excessively high and exceeds other comparable county councils—this year it is some £23 million. Bedfordshire is way above the family average in terms of spending on particular services.

Education is the greatest spender, and Bedfordshire spends some 14 per cent. more on the number of teachers and on teachers' salaries than other councils in the basket of comparable authorities. If Bedfordshire had the best education system, if parents could say that their children were getting better education than anyone else and that examination results, even in the difficult areas—some of which are in my constituency—are better than in comparable councils and that people regard it as worth moving to Bedfordshire for that education, I would not complain. In surveys conducted recently by Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools, however, Bedfordshire has consistently come near the bottom of the table for

examination results and qualifications. That does not justify the enormous expenditure by an authority which is under political control. The Audit Commission rightly criticised the authority's organisation and management and said that spending on secondary education far exceeds what is required and that, in its analysis, the spending policy is basically flawed.

Part of the problem is that those who purport to represent the people of Bedfordshire in county hall will not bite the bullet and take the tough decisions to reduce the number of schools that a Tory council would have taken if it were in power. Item 14 of Bedfordshire county council's audit of accounts 1988-89 states:

"There are too many schools. Up to 30 per cent. of the places available are unfilled."

That is a disgrace and means that between 10 and 12 schools should be closed if the authority wants to make money available to improve services which need improvement—for example, special areas, provision for the young, and facilities for sixth forms. The authority could save money if it had the courage to take those political decisions, but it refuses to do so.

The Audit Commission goes on to say that something must be done

"to reduce the present imbalance between school places and overall pupil numbers."

On that basis alone, some £5 million per annum—possibly more—would be saved.

Social service expenditure by Bedfordshire county council is some 15 per cent. above the average. If our old people's homes were the best in the country I would not say a word about it. If every child in care in Bedfordshire had better treatment than children elsewhere I would not complain, but regrettably there is gross inefficiency within the service, although people who work in those hard-pressed services try hard. Savings could be made and have been identified by the Audit Commission. The tragedy is that, while we have an authority in power whose business seems to be to spend other people's money, those savings will not be made.

This year, once again, despite the difficulties that we face—I acknowledge that the new legislative requirements that the Government have rightly put upon local authorities have created more—the council still refuses to make savings and consequently to improve services. As the years go by, the situation snowballs. If Bedfordshire continues to be run by virtual loonies from country hall who continue with the same policy, we shall be in severe difficulties.

If my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House takes one message back to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and to the new Minister of State, it should be that any alterations made to the community charge—I am suspicious of any alterations —must not give more money to authorities such as Bedfordshire, which will only spend the money willy-nilly, without thought for our constituents.

Not long ago my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) made certain suggestions in *The Times* about changes in the structure of local authorities. Some of those ideas were taken up today in an excellent article by Simon Heffer in *The Daily Telegraph*, which I recommend to my hon. Friends. With more energy and virulence than my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley, Mr. Heffer says that it is about time that we abolished county councils. They represent a level of local government that has become unnecessary.

If a message came out of the local election results—particularly the wonderful results enjoyed by the Conservative party in Wandsworth and Westminster—it is that if small local authorities can control spending and their destiny, as Wandsworth and Westminster have done since the GLC disappeared, there is some chance that the community charge system will make those spending the money accountable. I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House will take that on board, and if he does not recommend that action be taken before the House rises for the spring recess, he should certainly recommend that it be a part of the manifesto for the next Conservative Government in the 1990s.

The county councils are a level of government over-burdened by bureaucrats. They are expensive and do not work. Many of my constituents in Luton long for the days when the borough controlled its own education and social services. The small size of such a committee is attractive and must appear so to most hon. Members. We felt that we could control our own destiny, and it would be on our own heads. Wandsworth and Westminster have proved that only on that basis have we any chance of controlling local government expenditure, which seems to go up and up, especially in counties which are Liberal or Labour-controlled.

I have some sympathy for the idea of my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley about an election each year. I believe there should be elections on a three-year basis, as happens in some local authorities now. We must abolish the larger tier of local government, which has become unwieldy and an excuse for representatives who are not fit to be in government for all sorts of reasons. We would then get representatives who are far closer to the electorate—the charge payers.

As the House rises for a short holiday at Whitsun, I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House will think of the people of Bedfordshire and the burden placed upon them by the Liberal-Labour-controlled council, and that he and his colleagues will come back to the House with radical proposals for the next Conservative Government which will make local authorities far more accountable and ensure that we never have such Liberal-Labour overspending again.

5.58 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I disagree with virtually every word uttered by the hon. Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle). That will not surprise him. At least I congratulate him on making a speech other than on South Africa. Given the speeches that he makes in this place, I was beginning to think that he represented Pretoria, North rather than Luton, North. He referred to a number of issues to which I am sure we shall return. The future of the shire counties is being debated within the Labour party. Their future will form part of our proposals when we come to power.

I intend to refer to an anniversary that has passed largely unnoticed this week; it is an anniversary that I know the Prime Minister would prefer to forget. Nearly two years ago, she was present at a ceremony at Battersea power station. She went there for one of those ubiquitous photo opportunities that she gets. She was seen with Mr.

[Mr. Tony Banks]

John Broome, the developer. She described him as a man of enterprise and vision. His enterprise and vision was to turn Battersea power station into a pleasure dome.

The Prime Minister was there to give encouragement to Mr. Broome. She hailed him as one of the best examples of Thatcherism in practice. Mr. Broome, no doubt warming to the theme, having been encouraged by the Prime Minister in that way, gave an enormous hostage to fortune, as it turned out, by saying to the Prime Minister, "I shall invite you back on 21 May 1990 at 2.30 pm in order to unveil this great development. If you come at 2.33, Ma'am, you will have missed it." The Prime Minister was chuffed, as she often is by hearing words of that sort—bravura, bravado, call it what you will. However, the right hon. Lady still has a decade or so in which to wander down to Battersea, where she will find that she has missed nothing, given the present sad state of dereliction of that wonderful building.

The Prime Minister was right to say that the proposed development was a symbol of Thatcherism—of Flash Harrys with flash ideas, leading ultimately to failure. One could take it a stage further and say that Battersea power station as it exists at the moment is a symbol of the country—an empty shell, its grandeur and glory gone, decaying away due to inefficiency, neglect and lack of care. That symbol of dereliction, just a few miles down river at Battersea, is a symbol of the country. The power station is a derelict eyesore.

The Secretary of State will probably soon receive a request for Battersea power station's listed building status to be lifted so that the power station can be demolished. If the wind, the rain and the weather have not done that already for Mr. Broome, that is what the Government will be asked to agree to, and they will be as derelict as that building if they are prepared to allow that to happen. There ought to be shame on the Conservative Benches. Certainly there ought to be shame in No. 10 Downing street for having gone along with this carnival, this festival that has had such an unhappy ending, the problem still not having been resolved.

Battersea power station is a London landmark. Many of us have come to love that building. *[Interruption.]* The hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) laughs and thinks that that is a joke, but many Londoners look with great warmth and affection on that building. Previously they derived great warmth from it. To see it in its present bad state is no laughing matter.

The Government have been extremely casual with public assets. By means of their privatisation proposals, they have given them away. What Lady Porter did with the three Westminster cemeteries, the Government have done regularly with many public assets. They have given many of them away, together with sweeteners. Privatisation is nonsense in that respect, and we know it.

I want to compare briefly what happened to Battersea power station with what might happen to county hall. Proposals are now coming forward that are not entirely dissimilar to Mr. Broome's proposals for Battersea power station. The county hall proposals are for a luxury hotel, offices, a business centre, an amusement park and luxury flats—all the Flash Harry ideas that Mr. Broome had for Battersea power station. I disagree with the proposals. The Secretary of State is considering—*[Interruption.]* I intend to say what I should like county hall to be used for. The hon. Member for Staffordshire, South-East (Mr. Lightbown) knows exactly what I intend to say.

The considerations arising from the public planning inquiry are now sitting on the Secretary of State's desk; he will undoubtedly deliberate upon them, and he ought to bring them to the House so that they can be fully debated. The House has an interest in what is being proposed for a building on the other side of the river that is within our line of vision. We ought to decide whether we are happy with the proposals. I disagree fundamentally with them; they involve the spending of a great deal of money.

The Secretary of State has to decide whether the new Flash Harrys on the south bank will have the resources to carry out their proposals. I have seen little evidence of their financial assets being sufficient to fund the proposed development. We do not want to end up with a Battersea power station problem immediately opposite us on the other side of the river—county hall with its roof off and the builders walking off site because the money has run out. Despite the fact that I intensely dislike the proposals, I want the Secretary of State at least to ensure that the developers have the financial wherewithal to complete their development.

I despise the proposals. It is a political decision. The former Secretary of State for the Environment, the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), said on one occasion that he would like county hall to be demolished brick by brick. He could not demolish it, because it is a listed building. However, political symbolism makes the Tory Government want county hall to be used for a purpose that is totally outwith its previous function. County hall was built with inner-London ratepayers' money. It was built as a centre for London local government. It is a symbol of local democracy in London—the local democracy that this Government have done so much to undermine and destroy. We want couny hall to remain in its original form and to be used for its purpose—as the seat of London local government.

I am delighted to know that among the welter of policy proposals that are about to be launched upon a grateful nation by the Labour party there is one that states that a Labour Government will restore London-wide local government. There will be a new London council. We must ensure that it is based in county hall. I want to extract from Opposition Front Bench spokesmen—not my hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) who is sitting on the Opposition Front Bench now, so he need not worry too much about it—an undertaking that, if the Secretary of State for the Environment allows a hotel to be developed on the county hall site, a Labour Government will take it back by means of compulsory purchase.

Who would that upset? It would upset the developers, the Flash Harrys. I could not give a monkey's toss for them, nor would many Londoners. It may upset a few rich tourists. I am sorry for them, but there are plenty of luxury hotels for them in and around London. If the Labour party in opposition and then in government were to give such a pledge, most of the people of London would support them. It would be a politically popular move.

As long as I draw breath in this House, which I hope will be for some years to come, I shall strive to get county hall back into public ownership to act as the headquarters of London local government. I have great confidence that I shall succeed.

6.9 pm

Sir John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): Before we adjourn for the spring recess, I wish to discuss the teaching of history in our schools. The subject has been greatly ventilated in recent weeks and we have also received the final report of the history working group of the national curriculum.

A knowledge of history is absolutely essential if we are to retain our identity as a nation. It is most important that our children should understand what has made our country—its origins and its development through the centuries until the present time. It is essential that they should know how our small island on the edge of the continent of Europe was first colonised by Rome, passed through the so-called dark ages into the flowering of Anglo-Saxon civilisation followed by the Norman conquest and the feudal system, the wars of the roses when the aristocracy nearly destroyed itself, the reformation and the Tudor monarchy, the wars against France which we usually won, our own civil war, the growth and development of the British empire which at one time encompassed a quarter of the world—and what happy days they were—the rise of democracy and the two great wars this century.

Some people are shy about dwelling too much on our island history for fear of upsetting the immigrants among us. That is a mistaken view. Immigrants, like everyone else, expect us to be true to ourselves and to our history and identity as a nation.

Children should be made to learn the dates of the great events of past centuries. That is not just dull learning by rote; it will give them a framework in which to place all those unfolding events and to understand how they relate to one another. They will thus in due course begin to realise the remarkable continuity of the history of our small island. Incidentally, my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) recently remarked that what we are all about in this place is the continuity of history.

Children should know about kings, queens, statesmen and other leaders; and about battles and other great events. But that does not mean that they should neglect social, domestic and occasionally local history. While for most people in the United Kingdom history tends to be mainly the history of England, that does not mean that events in Scotland, Wales and Ireland should be ignored.

Mr. Winnick: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir John Stokes: No. Many hon. Members still wish to speak and we have only one more hour.

We are an old nation with roots going a long way back, unlike some of the newer nations in Europe, and it is essential that children should appreciate that. I have always been fascinated by the continuity of our history —for instance, the coronation rite, which goes back to before the Norman conquest, and the monarchy that can trace its ancestry back to King Alfred in Saxon times, the continued existence of the House of Lords and the hereditary peers of whom I am so fond, the tradition and procedures of the Chamber, our jury system and the English common law, the many words and phrases in the English language which go back for centuries and our wonderful heritage of cathedrals, churches, castles and country houses and the ancient towns and villages that we all love so much.

We have been most fortunate in not having been conquered since 1066, and our internal wars were mild compared with the fearful struggles on the continent. Our island status, guarded in the old days by a powerful navy, has kept our country intact.

The growth of the British empire and the trade that followed it is a romance in itself. The colonisation of north America and its subsequent successful rebellion is a unique story and our influence in America has been profound.

The more one studies our history and development, which are so different from those of nations on the continent, the more necessary it is to examine with great care, if not with suspicion, any proposals for our ancient country to join a new European federation. We are not a highly centralised country. We never had a Code Napoleon, but only a common-sense common law. Nor do we have a written constitution. We are a practical, not a theoretical, people; a kindly, tolerant, gentle people, slow to wrath but very angry and determined when need be; perhaps a people inclined to be lazy but capable of immense exertions in a crisis.

There is a great deal to be proud of in our history, despite some shaming events from time to time, such as our treatment of Ireland, but there is nothing wrong in being proud of our past. We in Parliament are trustees of posterity and must hand on the torch of our civilisation to succeeding generations. We have contributed a great deal to the civilisation of the world and we should be proud of that. We still have a great deal to give the world and we should rejoice in that. I am happy to say that at present our standing among nations remains high.

6.15 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): One of the achievements in our history of which we should be proud is the development of the franchise—the struggle in 1832 to reform Parliament and to establish more equal and equitable electoral districts, the struggle throughout the later 19th century, especially by the Chartists, to establish a universal franchise for men, the struggle of the suffragettes in the 20th century, and finally the achievement of the universal franchise based upon people's residential rights that was finally established in 1928.

The pride that we take in the development of the franchise should be demonstrated by our intention to ensure that nothing removes or undermines it, but to extend democracy and the participation and involvement of the British people who struggled so hard to achieve electoral rights. But what is happening now? There are great problems about the state of the franchise. The franchise is being undermined and nibbled away by one piece of legislation in particular which cannot be reformed or altered to avoid that serious effect. That measure is of course the poll tax.

Before 1987, there was a close correlation between the numbers on the electoral register and the estimated population of those over 18. As we have a universal franchise and reasonable techniques for calculating the population, one would expect those figures to approximate. However, since 1987, the figures have started to deviate, initially in Scotland but now in England and Wales but not in Northern Ireland, which has a distinct advantage in not having the poll tax.

[Mr. Harry Barnes]

It is clear that the major factor undermining the electoral register is the poll tax. The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys recognises that the decline in registration is due not to demographic factors or changes in the age structure of the population but to non-registration. If offers a number of reasons. The Prime Minister wrote to me suggesting that the decline in registration in 1989 may have been due to the postal strike of September 1988. The decline in Scotland was not associated with a postal strike, and the poll tax was introduced a year earlier in Scotland than in England. The poll tax factor on electoral registration operated earlier.

The poll tax register and the electoral register overlap considerably. The principles of accountability, on which the poll tax was based, are similar to those for electoral registration. If people are desperate, they take desperate remedies to protect themselves. People are not registering for the poll tax, but realising that their names still appear on the electoral register. That applies even to people who are only just 18, because the poll tax registrar can go back to past electoral rolls to discover missing names. Such people will not bother to register.

I asked the Library to produce evidence on the link between people aged 18 and over and electoral registration. In Great Britain, at least 1·5 per cent. of the population have disappeared from the electoral register. That amounts to more than 600,000 people, or 1,000 per constituency if it were evenly distributed throughout the country. But it will not be evenly distributed. There are obvious problems in some areas, such as in Glasgow, where, since the introduction of the poll tax, 40,000 people have disappeared from the electoral register, or 6·5 per cent.; in Liverpool 25,000 are missing, or 7·5 per cent.; and in the past two years in Finchley, the Prime Minister's constituency, 4·6 per cent. and 3·9 per cent. of people have disappeared from the electoral register.

I rang the electoral registration office in Finchley to ask about the reason for that under-registration. The answer was that it assumed it had something to do with the poll tax. Some opinion polls show that the Prime Minister may lose her seat at the next election, but another factor must be taken into account: those who were interviewed or their equivalents may not appear on the electoral register.

The people who have most to fear from the poll tax are those who will disappear from the electoral register. Masses of people are disappearing from it, especially in some areas. That is serious. It is doubly serious when we take into account a measure that the House passed recently to extend the expatriate vote on a voluntary basis —that is nonsense, given the obligatory franchise in this country—to 3 million overseas voters. If only 20 per cent. register, they will replace the 600,000 people who have been squeezed off the electoral register by the poll tax. That should worry hon. Members.

The Government's commitment to manipulating the franchise is greater than their commitment to ensuring that people appear on the register. Statistics on electoral registration advertising expenditure that I have obtained from the Prime Minister's office show that in 1988-89 only 0·3 per cent. of total advertising expenditure—£322,000 —was spent on electoral registration. That contrasts starkly with the £760,000 which has been spent on encouraging people to take up franchise rights overseas and to vote in our elections.

The electoral register is being manipulated. The franchise is being fixed and fiddled. Given the great sense of history in this Chamber, we should be as concerned about that as we are about some of the other great issues, such as the attack on the environment and the many dangers and injustices of much of the legislation that the Government have passed. If we lose the franchise, we lose one of our most sacred traditional rights. Hon. Members and everyone outside should be deeply concerned about that. We should ensure that the poll tax is abolished and that the franchise is fully and properly re-established in this country.

6.26 pm

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): On Monday, we spent quite a lot of time discussing mad cow disease, which has not infected anyone. In contrast, more than 5,000 people are slaughtered every year on our roads, more than 300,000 are injured and, of those, 60,000 are seriously injured. Before the House rises for the spring Adjournment, I should like to make a few remarks on the subject. I must declare an interest, because I have the honour to be the president of the Guild of Experienced Motorists.

There have recently been signs of an improvement in the number of road accidents. The creation of motorways was a positive step, because research shows that one is far less likely to have an accident on a motorway than on other roads. The anti-drink-driving campaign has been a success and should be maintained. We must bear in mind the fact that four out of every five accidents are not related to drink, and we should be applying our minds to those accidents.

There are more road accidents in East Anglia than in any other region of Britain. We are fortunate to have the best health in the country, probably the best employment record and much going for us, but it is a disgrace that so many people are slaughtered or injured on East Anglian roads. Within East Anglia, the record of the county of Cambridgeshire is the worst. The overall increase in road accidents in Cambridgeshire since 1984 is 16 per cent. On rural roads where the 40 mph speed limit does not apply, the increase is 28 per cent. and on trunk roads it is 25 per cent.

Since 1987, there have been different trends within the East Anglian region. The figures have decreased in Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire, but have increased in Norfolk, Essex and Suffolk. Cambridgeshire has experienced the biggest increase of all, which is against the trend elsewhere in the region and country. There are several reasons for that. I shall highlight only two in this short debate. Suffice it to say that in my constituency the A45 and A505 are absolute death traps. It is a nightmare to drive along them and appalling to see time and time again in local newspapers or on local television the ghastly mangled wrecks which are the result of accidents that occur on those roads. That is not good enough in a society such as ours.

I know that the Government appreciate the problem. My right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon), the then Secretary of State for Transport, said in July 1989 when introducing the White Paper:

"The eastern region programme is being increased by over three and a half times . . . That reflects East Anglia's status as having the fastest growing economy in the country."

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, in a reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord), said on 30 October 1989:

"One of the main features of the White Paper was its recognition that East Anglia has an inadequate road infrastructure. There are substantial plans set out in the White Paper to produce an improvement, and we shall honour them."—[*Official Report*, 30 October 1989; Vol. 159, c. 4.]

Those are fine words, on which I entirely rely.

Meanwhile, it is unacceptable that the appalling casualties should continue in my part of the country. The slaughter on the roads results in more deaths than any other cause—more than heart disease, tumours, diseases of the respiratory system and air accidents, much more than bombs and certainly more than mad cow disease.

There are several general observations to be made on this subject. Research has shown that the first principal cause of road casualties is driving too fast for the conditions that prevail. Conditions on most British roads are unsuitable for the speed at which vehicles move. The other cause is driving too close behind the vehicle in front, a persistent nuisance. That can be overcome quite easily through technology if the will were there to compel vehicles to be technically adapted.

The driving test is still hopelessly inadequate and needs to be revised. It is ridiculous that people can crawl around a suburb in a little Mini and then step into the type of vehicle that needs to be handled with the skill of Nigel Mansell. Again, the penalties imposed are too feeble. There should be much greater use of the power of disqualification and of confiscation of the vehicle involved in the accident. There could be greater use of sleeping policemen in rural areas and villages. These have been found to be effective restraints on speed.

Manufacturers must show a greater sense of responsibility. What is the point of making relatively cheap cars for popular use which can travel at 140 mph when the speed limit everywhere is no higher than 70 mph? What is the point of producing cars with engines that require someone with the skill of Stirling Moss or Nigel Mansell to handle them? Often such cars are poorly maintained and the drivers do not have the skill required. They have completely inadequate training. Manufacturers have a responsibility to incorporate the latest safety devices. I am bound to comment that, if it had not been for Government action, manufacturers would probably not even insert brakes in vehicles.

All this mayhem and chaos on our roads results in dreadful loss of resources and expenditure, heavy burdens on our Health Service, pressure on our hard-pressed police, bereavement of families and bitter misery for those who are disabled for life, as all too many are. It is no consolation to them to be told that in Europe and in other countries the number of casualties is higher.

This matter deserves greater scrutiny both by Her Majesty's Government and by the press and the media. That is especially true in the county of Cambridgeshire.

6.34 pm

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): The tragic events in Israel's administered territories and Jordan this week have highlighted again the unhappy Arab-Israeli conflict and we should pause to think about the situation for a moment before we rise for the recess.

While elsewhere in the world there are so many encouraging and happy developments, it is depressing that in the middle east there is still unsettlement and misery. Naturally, Israel is blamed and comfort is given to her enemies by Governments who should know better, even if they feel that they cannot do better.

I do not believe for a moment that Israel has any other intention than to see that its nationhood survives secure and that it remains an independent, multi-racial democracy under the rule of law. I believe that when Israel turns to violence, it is forced to do so in order to survive as a nation and to protect its borders and people as any other nation under unremitting attack would have to do. When the intifada is violent, the containment cannot but be violent. If there were no uprising, no one would be wounded and no one would die.

When terrorism repeatedly strikes Israel from its foreign borders, as it has for many years, Israel has tried to end those attacks by building a buffer zone between it and the Lebanon. Sadly people die in the fighting which ensues. If there were no terrorism and no military attack on Israel, no one would be wounded and no one would die.

I believe that Israel wants to live in peace with its Arab neighbours. Its people are not warlike by nature and, because they were so often deprived of human rights, they have respect for the human rights of others, such as the Palestinians. It is inconceivable that Israel should want to use up either its human resources in endless fighting or its economic resources, which are difficult to come by, in the endless struggle for survival. If Israel's Arab neighbours were prepared to live in peace with Israel, there would be no daily killing or misery.

If Israel had nothing to fear from its neighbours it would not need to settle the high ground on the west bank to build defensive settlements and land for peace would be the bargain now being struck. Of course, Israel wants to settle the 1 million Jews from the Soviet Union, not only because they are fugitives from a country in which, as Jews, they were not welcome, but because the tiny state of Israel, which is so vulnerable to the sheer numbers alone of its neighbours, naturally wants to be stronger. If the United States and other countries in the world will not take the Soviet Jews, where else do we expect them to go?

So far, the settlement on the west bank has been widely exaggerated by those who have reported it. I understand that fewer than 1 per cent. of Jewish emigrants have settled on the west bank. That is 32 families in all—138 people. Of course, the whole situation is unsatisfactory and unhappy and there is conflict which results in hatred and the spilling of blood, so we ask yet again at this time how it will all end and whether we can help.

One thing is certain. We cannot reasonably expect Israel to agree with any state or organisation that it should commit suicide. The greatest problem is that the Arabs demand a Palestinian state at least to begin with on the west bank, but everyone who has the slightest knowledge or understanding of the area knows that such a development is impossible. It is impossible for the Palestinians because there is no water, energy, raw materials, or infrastructure and no body politic to govern such a barren place. It is impossible for the neighbours of such a state, be it Jordan, which has its own history of violence to contend with from the PLO, or be it Israel. No nation could permit an enemy which is sworn to destroy it to have its guns pointed at its heart from only a mile or two away. It is 10 miles from the border to Tel Aviv, which

[Mr. Ivan Lawrence]

could be taken out in a moment. How long would it be before the west bank state needed to expand into Jordan or Israel?

In opposing a PLO state on its borders, Israel is hardly being unreasonable, although without a stable Government speaking for all the people it is perhaps difficult for it to have a cohesive foreign policy. One of the reasons being advanced for maintaining the absurd proportional representation which has caused the political chaos in Israel is that if it were abolished it would remove the small Arab representation in the Knesset, which the Israeli Government does not want to do.

There is, of course, an Israeli peace plan—to have free democratic elections among the Palestinians in the territories, thus providing elected representatives who can negotiate with Israel without fear of Arab terrorism, and from which autonomy would automatically emerge. The plan would seek to ensure that the Palestinians enjoy that autonomy for three years while confidence builds up between the two sides and while a final acceptable status for the territories is worked out, and backed by the super-powers or the United Nations. I believe that, in practice, everything would be negotiable in such talks, as was the case when the hard-line Mr. Begin negotiated peace for land in the Sinai with President Sadat at Camp David, and peace with Egypt resulted.

It is asked why Israel will not talk to Arafat, the Palestinian leader. Did he not say in December 1988 that he would recognise the state of Israel and renounce terrorism? The answer is that the Israelis do not trust Arafat to deliver his promise—and nor should anyone else trust him. Why? First, it is because in the years since the renunciation of terrorism at Geneva there have been 13 terrorists attacks by Fatah inside Israel's 1967 borders, 17 border attacks by the PLO or affiliated organisations, including two Katyuska rocket attacks on kibbutzim in the Jordan valley, 15 infiltration attempts across all borders, including two by Fatah, and 125 Palestinians have been murdered on the directions of the "Unified Command" by which the PLO operates in the territories.

Either the PLO leader is responsible for the terrorism of the groups which operate under his umbrella of command, or he is not. If he is responsible, he has not renounced violence. If he is not responsible, how can anyone expect Israel to negotiate with a man who has no control over or ability to stop terrorist attacks on Israel? What security would there be for Israel if it negotiated with Arafat? If he is in complete control, let him call off the violence that has been going on in the territories for two and a half years —the intifada. That will prove his control and power and oblige Israel to recognise the strength. Israel might then talk to him.

The second reason why one should not trust Mr. Arafat —if more proof were wanted—is the speech that he made to senior Fatah military personnel in Baghdad on 6 April 1990, which was reported in the Paris-based Lebanese newspaper *Al Muharrar* on 10 April as follows:

"Open fire on the new Jewish immigrants—be they from the Soviet Union, Ethiopia or anywhere else . . . I want you to shoot, on the ground or in the air, at every immigrant who thinks our land is a playground and who thinks that immigration to it is a vacation or a picnic . . .

Do not tell me that political decisions prevent us from military activity against immigrants. It makes no difference whether they live in a Jaffa"—

which is just inside the 1967 boundary—

"or in Jericho. I give you explicit instructions to open fire, do everything to stop the flow of immigration . . . I give you my instructions to use violence against the immigrants. I will jail whoever refuses to do this. My words are not just a threat, they are the reality. From today on, I will incarcerate whoever refuses to obey my instructions . . . Today I publish my orders to use violence against the immigrants and I wll put anyone who fails into prison . . . I have already put into prison Palestinian ambassadors, members of the Revolutionary Councils and clergymen when they made a mistake. My decision and the decision of The Fatah to use violence must be carried out in real terms".

Is that a man of peace? Has the leopard changed its spots? How can that language inspire anyone to believe that Mr. Arafat can be trusted when he talks of peace? That speech was made six weeks ago and has not yet been denied by Mr. Arafat. Can anyone blame the Israelis for not trusting him to deliver? When Western Governments continue to pander to Arafat, to pretend that they accept his moderation and his renunciation of violence, is it any wonder that Israel loses patience with those who proffer such absurd advice?

Is there no hope then? Of course there is hope. There has to be. Camp David showed that there can be hope, however hopeless the situation might appear. If the Israelis get their political act together, speak strongly in one voice and start acting flexibly, there will be hope. If they continue their policy of not settling Jews on the west bank in large numbers—because that would set back the cause of peace—there will be hope. If the PLO genuinely stops its terrorism, if the Palestinians elect moderate representatives democratically, if the United Nations and other world powers make an effort to push the peace initiative forward with fairness and good sense, the situation is not hopeless.

I hope that as the House rises for this short recess the Government's determination to be more understanding about Israel's difficulties—and its refusal to accept the hollow assurances given for its security—will become more evident. Israel should not negotiate with unrepentant terrorists. It cannot be expected to negotiate with neighbours who hate its very existence. Provided that our own and other Governments recognise those facts, they will help the peace process because Israel will feel less alone and will be more willing to accept sensible international advice.

6.47 pm

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): Before the House rises, I wish to raise briefly the case of one of my constituents, Mr. John Richardson. The House may think that this has become the Israeli half-hour, because I want to raise issues of concern that relate directly to Mr. Richardson's visit to Israel this morning. However, much of what the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) said, which was interesting and to which I listened carefully, is not directly relevant to this case.

Mr. Richardson, who lives in Leicester, left for Israel this morning. He arrived in Tel Aviv at 4.45 this morning. Immediately on arrival, he was detained by the Israeli security services. He was allowed no direct contact with the British embassy, although he telephoned the embassy and asked for someone to go out to Tel Aviv airport. Mr. Richardson was sent back to Britain on the first plane. He arrived in Britain at 8.45 this morning and came to see me in Westminster at 1 o'clock because I was anxious to have the facts before raising this matter in the House.

Mr. Richardson was in Israel to attend a symposium. He was supposed to give a lecture in two days' time on the situation there. He is of impeccable character. I have known him—not only as a constituent, but also as a friend—for over six years. He is the commissioning editor for a newpaper, the *Ithaca Press*.

I am glad that the Leader of the House, the deputy Prime Minister, who has great experience of foreign affairs, is on the Treasury Bench, and I hope that he will press the Foreign Secretary at the earliest opportunity for a statement on the way in which British citizens are treated in Israel.

I refer also to the position of British Airways. When he left Tel Aviv airport, Mr. Richardson's passport was not given back to him. It was handed to a British Airways steward and was not returned to him until his return to Britain. We should examine carefully the role of our airways and airlines in immigration matters: it is wrong that a British citizen should have his passport retained by an air steward.

I raise the issue not because I can help Mr. Richardson by so doing—he left the House at 2.30 this afternoon and returned to Leicester—but to draw the House's attention to the fact that British citizens who are travelling in good faith to Israel are sometimes sent back without explanation on the first available flight. I hope that the matter will be taken up by the Leader of the House, and that he will mention the debate to the Foreign Secretary.

6.49 pm

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): I am sure that the House will understand if I say that, much as I enjoy the privilege of speaking here, I wish I were somewhere else. Tonight I would like to be at the annual meeting of Wrekin district council, under the leadership of Councillor Malcolm Smith. Tonight Phil Heighway ends his one-year term in office as chairman, and is replaced by Graham Bould, with John Minor as his deputy. The council has been Labour-controlled since its inception, and that was greatly reinforced by a tremendous by-election result a week ago, when the Conservative vote of 1987 was halved, with the Conservative candidate coming third behind the Greens.

I have a specific matter to raise which relates to the responsibilities of the Leader of the House. I hope that the House will attempt to adjust its procedures—however uncomfortable that may be for some hon. Members—to the television age. For some six months, the nation has been looking at us, and it is perhaps time that we started looking at ourselves more critically.

It would be a mistake, however, not to refer to some of the contributions that have been made. It was notable that two Conservative Members spoke about the inadequacies of the Health Service. Opposition Members say "Hear, hear" to that. One Conservative Member made a telling contribution about the retirement age. I appreciate that issue only too well, especially the question of men who wish to retire at 60.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) made a powerful speech—which I am sure will receive universal approval—about the effects on haemophiliacs infected by the AIDS virus. What I liked about his speech was that he made specific recommendations, based on his experiences as a Minister, about how the matter should be resolved. I hope that the Leader of the House takes to heart my right hon. Friend's comments about the treatment of Thalidomide victims; perhaps that is an important precedent that could be applied in this case.

My hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) made a characteristically informed speech about the problems of the coal industry, about which he is, perhaps, better qualified to speak than any other hon. Member. He speaks from great personal knowledge. He pointed out the differences between the current possible round of redundancies and earlier ones, and I hope that the Leader of the House will refer to that in his reply.

My hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) raised an issue that is dear to my heart: responsibility for Government communications and co-ordination. I am deputy to my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Mr. Cunningham). He now shadows three Secretaries of State in varying degrees—the Secretary of State for Energy, the Leader of the House and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and we await the possibility of more being added to the list. We can cope with them, but it would be nice to know exactly what their responsibilities are.

I am sorry that my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) is not here now. He made an important contribution about the future of county hall. I hope that the hon. Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Sir J. Stokes), with his deep sense of history, would have seconded my hon. Friend's proposal. We do not want to see historic buildings turned into luxury hotels; they should once again be the seats of democracy that they were in the past.

While we are on a democratic note, let me add that my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) made an effective speech about the impact of the poll tax on people's ability to vote. The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) also referred to some of the injustices of the poll tax. The poll tax, the Health Service and democracy—those themes have recurred.

We should try to make our procedures more intelligible to people outside. For the past six months, the country has been looking at us with varying degrees of amazement, interest and ridicule. This motion is a classic example of our procedures. It is nearly 7 pm, and we are debating

"That this House, at its rising on Thursday 24th May, do adjourn until Tuesday 5th June."

Suppose that we told any group of workers in the country that they could have a holiday next week, but that before they could have it there would need to be a three-hour debate, continuing until late in the evening. They would consider that a ludicrous proposition, and it would be passed without a vote. All hon. Members know that this is an opportunity for people to raise important issues, but surely we should be able to do that without calling an Adjournment debate.

The House should keep more sensible hours. I know that Conservative Members get worked up about the hours in the House. In the last full Session, we sat for longer than almost any other legislature in the world: at 2, 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning, I sometimes wonder to what effect. In the 1988-89 Session, the House sat for 175 days: on 121 of those days—about 70 per cent.—the debate continued until after 10.30 pm; on 80 days—about 40 per cent.—it continued until after midnight; and on 21 days it continued until after 2 am. I do not mind—and I am sure

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that no other hon. Member minds—sitting in the middle of the night if we are considering critical issues of national importance, but in some Consolidated Fund debates I have addressed a massed audience of three hon. Members at 5 o'clock in the morning, and I am sure that there must be a more sensible way. I am amazed that the camera operator can stay awake at that time of night. Hon. Members should examine again the possibility of morning sittings.

I know that traditionalist Conservative Members will not like this, but I think that we should think again about the way in which we address each other in the House. I can refer to the man sitting opposite me as the Leader of the House, although not many people outside know what that means; I can refer to him as the right hon. and learned Member for Surrey, East—although I do not know whether he is learned until I hear his reply to the debate. But if I were to address him as Sir Geoffrey Howe, you, Madam Deputy Speaker, would rule me out of order—although that is what people know him as, just as I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford is Geoffrey Lofthouse. Why on earth can we not occasionally use the language of the real world? When we refer to someone as, for instance, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup, the commentators who must make our proceedings intelligible to the world outside must say in hushed tones that we are referring to Edward Heath. Our next comments are then lost, because the commentary drowns them.—*[Interruption.]* I am greatly encouraged that there is so much opposition from Conservative Members who want to retain the House as a completely unintelligible club.

What about the nonsensical way in which we ask questions at Prime Minister's Question Time? The Prime Minister is asked to list her official engagements for the day and on Tuesday she said:

"This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today."—[*Official Report*, 22 May 1990; Vol. 173, c. 16.]

On 10 May the Prime Minister replied to that same question:

"This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today."—[*Official Report*, 10 May 1990; Vol. 172, c. 392.]

I could go on and on. Those answers are a waste of *Hansard* and a waste of the House's time. Twice a week we have a quarter of an hour of precious moments in which to question the Prime Minister, but each week we have inane questions and answers. I am all in favour of general questions, but not silly ones, and it should be possible to ask specific questions of the Prime Minister.

When the televising experiment comes to an end I hope that we will look more modestly and critically at the way in which we operate. A democracy will not work unless people understand what we are saying and our procedures. At the moment they leave a great deal to be desired and I hope that we shall improve them as quickly as possible.

7 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe): The hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott), if I am still allowed to call him that, closed our proceedings with uncharacteristically acerbic observations. I thought that we could take comfort from the fact that this curious ritual of an Adjournment debate had enabled 18 hon. Members to raise a wide variety of issues in a short space of time, but I fear that I shall be unable to deal with all of them because the time allowed is too short.

With regard to the procedures of the House, the hon. Member for The Wrekin might like to notice that on Monday this week we announced a series of substantial reforms in the procedures relating to European Community matters. Yesterday we received a report from the Select Committee on Procedure which, if accepted, will reduce by 90 per cent. the number of questions tabled and will save about £750,000 a year, on which I look with favour. The hon. Gentleman will also note that the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), answering for the House of Commons Commission, today gave an important reply about the work that the Commission has set in hand to review the management of the House. That is not too bad a record.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Sir B. Hayhoe) and my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) discussed National Health Service expenditure. I know that they join me in endorsing the spending on the NHS under the Government. That spending has never been higher. It has gone up by nearly 39 per cent. in real terms since we came into office and it will rise by more than £5 billion in the two years between 1989 and 1991. My right hon. Friend drew attention to the differential rate of expansion between the family practitioner services and hospital and community health services, but there has been an increase in spending on hospital and community health services of 36 per cent. in real terms since 1978-79.

There has been some impact in Leicestershire and elsewhere as a result of the shortfall in land sales and we hope that that will not endure for very long. The Leicestershire district, however, has received an increase of nearly 3 per cent. in real terms in the year in question. My hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton also asked about borrowing, but I cannot add to what has already been said by the Secretary of State for Health. I am more enthusiastic about the other issue raised by my hon. Friend when he urged those responsible to ensure the appointment of an Archbishop of Canterbury who unequivocally believes in God. I echo my hon. Friend's wish and I am sure that that proposition will commend itself to many.

The right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) raised two specific issues with characteristic concern. The first related to the position of haemophiliacs infected with the HIV-AIDS virus. I can do no more than refer him to the speech of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health at the conclusion of the Adjournment debate on 9 May when he made plain that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister would respond specifically and in considered form to the point which he had raised.

The right hon. Gentleman also referred to the childhood cancer, neuroblastoma. He will appreciate that following the Adjournment debate on 30 March there has been a change in Parliamentary Under-Secretaries of State at the Department of Health. The new Parliamentary

Under-Secretary of State will be writing to the right hon. Gentleman in the very near future with the information that he requested.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle) understandably raised the question of the possible equalisation of retirement conditions and used as the basis for his speech the recent judgment of the European Court of Justice. Obviously we need to address that question with increasing effectiveness. I say that with some feeling as the issue has been around for some time. I was part-author of two pamphlets in the late 1960s which commended some progress in this matter. Within her Majesty's Government I can be seen as a reasonably committed advocate of progress towards resolving the question and I shall not allow the issue to be forgotten.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed raised a number of points about the community charge which I shall certainly draw to the attention of my right hon. and hon. Friends. I believe that the House was particularly struck by his argument about second homes, albeit empty, which are required for retirement. It is worth reminding the hon. Gentleman that there is already a substantial discretion with local authorities in that respect. We cannot make any changes this year, but local authorities should exercise their discretion more generously.

The hon. Gentleman also expressed his anxiety about the possibility of a debate on the police regulations laid down in 1990. That anxiety was echoed by my hon. Friend the Member for Poole (Mr. Ward). The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed will appreciate that the business that the House debates is that which I announce at business questions, not what might have been discussed through the usual channels. Last week I told the House that there would be an opportunity to debate the regulations. The timing of that debate will remain to be agreed through the usual channels, but my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, speaking at the Police Federation conference today, said that such a debate will take place after the recess.

Mr. Latham: It could hardly be before it.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: No, but hon. Members may take some comfort in the fact that it will take place after it.

The hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) raised a serious matter about the possible impact of changes in the fuel-burning policy of certain industries on employment in the coal industry. He will recognise that the installation of further flue gas desulphurisation plants is one option for meeting the tighter sulphur reduction targets after the turn of the century. It will be for British Coal to convince the generators that the cost and reliability of its product justifies such an investment.

The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) raised a number of points, none of which impressed me greatly. It is surely entirely proper for my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities to communicate with councillor Pickles, as he communicates with other councillors in his capacity as Minister. It is a curious observation to regard that as somehow improper. The hon. Gentleman had an Adjournment debate on skill centres only last week when his charges were fully answered by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Employment.

It is unconstructive for the hon. Gentleman to raise specific questions in the House about Members' interests as the very evidence to which he is referring is being considered by the Select Committee——

Mr. Cryer: It is published.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It may be published, but that does not mean that it is not proper for the Select Committee on Members' Interests to consider it rather than for the hon. Gentleman to raise that evidence in bits and pieces on the Floor of the House in a debate of this kind.

My hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler) made a number of interesting points about bovine spongiform encephalitis. He will know that a number of them were the subject of observations by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in the debate which took place on Monday. My right hon. Friend has been giving evidence on that complex subject to the Select Committee on Agriculture today. I hesitate to add my limited stock of knowledge to that already offered by my right hon. Friend.

My hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) made some telling comments about the extravagance, bureaucracy and inefficiency of Bedfordshire county council. It surprises us not at all because we all know, if we are well informed, that just as Conservative-controlled councils deliver high quality at low cost, so Labour-controlled councils offer poor services for charges which take no account of the charge payer.

In the intervention immediately following, by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), there was a reference which deserves at least some acknowledgement in relation to Battersea power station. The hon. Gentleman will know that a revised planning application is currently with Wandsworth local authority. Clearly, we all want to see the future of the power station resolved as quickly as possible. The hon. Gentleman will know also that county hall was the subject of a public inquiry last autumn. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will announce his decision when he has considered the report.

Apart from that, the hon. Gentleman's performance —the brash way in which he said, "Down with developers, out with tourists, exit enterprise, in with compulsory purchase orders, in with bureaucracy and up with expenditure", made him a perfect exhibit A in illustration of the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North. My hon. Friend the Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Sir J. Stokes) made a sweeping and entirely justified commendation of our nation's history and the importance of studying it. Perhaps he will join me in expressing the hope that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West will be consigned to the scrap heap of that history as an interesting example of Labour man.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) raised some characteristically thoughtful points about the registration of voters in relation to the registation of overseas voters. That is taking place in accordance with the legislation passed with the support of both sides of the House. When talking about the level of electoral registration, the hon. Gentleman should remember that in some years it does not keep pace with increases in the population. There are several explanations for the variation, so he should not jump to conclusions about it.

[Sir Geoffrey Howe]

My hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) made some important points about our record on traffic accidents. Overall, Britain has a better safety record than the European Community, but that is no cause for complacency—our record can and must be improved. My hon. Friend was right to draw attention to the features in his county. It is particularly important to improve our record in relation to children and pedestrians. I was glad that he made specific reference to the case for greater use of sleeping policemen, or humps, as a means of checking speeds in areas of special sensitivity, not only in village streets but near schools.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence), who has a distinguished record as an advocate, did not fall short of his own standard of advocacy in making some points on behalf of the people in the Government of Israel. None of us doubts the importance of that country's case for a peaceful and secure existence, but equally we attach importance to the case of the Palestinians for respect for their human rights. As so often before, therefore, we urge the PLO to maintain its commitment to a peaceful, negotiated settlement and we look to the Israeli Government to move quickly to dialogue and to avoid more violence and bloodshed. If there is one point that I should like to draw from my hon. and learned Friend's speech, it was his reference to a territory for peace. If that is the right basis for a deal, surely it cannot be entirely sensible to increase settlements in that territory which may yet be the subject——

It being three hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 22 (Periodic adjournments).*

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House, at its rising on Thursday 24th May, do adjourn until Tuesday 5th June.

Mr. Latham: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am sorry to raise the matter, but surely there are some conventions of the House that should be respected. An hon. Member came into the House shortly before the replies to the debate; he made a speech about a specific point and did not bother to stay for the closing speeches, although they were beginning immediately afterwards. I think that the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) should have been more courteous to the House.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): I had not noticed what happened, but I deprecate the fact that bad manners are shown in the Chamber. Common courtesies in terms of our parliamentary behaviour should be upheld at all times. I thank the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) for making the point. What he said, and my comments upon it, will be recorded in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is a convention that as soon as documents are published they are open to debate in the House. The Leader of the House implied that somehow, when the Select Committee on Members' Interests published evidence about parliamentary lobbying, it should not have been subject to debate. Surely you will agree that that is entirely wrong, but it is now on the record.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I note the hon. Gentleman's comments. As he says, the matter is now in the official record.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I was not saying that such documents should not as a matter of order be subject to debate in the House. I was merely saying that to introduce them in the casual selective way that they were introduced in the Adjournment debate was unconstructive.

Madam Deputy Speaker: It is a matter for debate.

Appropriation (No. 2) (Northern Ireland)

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Before I call the Minister of State, it might be helpful if I made it clear to the House that debate on the order may cover all matters for which Northern Ireland Departments, as distinct from the Northern Ireland Office, are responsible. Of course, hon. Members will appreciate that police and security are the principal excluded subjects.
7.15 pm

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. John Cope): I beg to move,

That the draft Appropriation (No. 2) (Northern Ireland) Order 1990, which was laid before this House on 16th May, be approved.

This is the main appropriation order for the Northern Ireland estimates for this financial year. It authorises the expenditure of £2,496 million. That amount, when added to the £1,817 million voted on account for 1990-91 by the House on 12 March, gives a total voted cash provision for Northern Ireland Departments of £4,313 million for this financial year. There is other public expenditure not included in the vote, for example, expenditure by the Northern Ireland national insurance fund and capital expenditure by the Housing Executive, funded by borrowing from the Northern Ireland Consolidated Fund. Therefore, the total public expenditure for the Departments amounts this year to £5,289 million.

The estimates booklet gives full details of the sums sought and is available as usual from the Vote Office. So is the commentary on public expenditure which describes it all in a less technical way. As you correctly reminded the House, Madam Deputy Speaker, the estimates for the Northern Ireland Office and for law and order services are not covered by the order. Of course, the House has other opportunities to debate law and order. Because of your strictures, I will just emphasise that the defeat of terrorism remains the Government's first public expenditure priority in Northern Ireland. But the economic and social programmes covered by the draft order are also of great importance to the well-being of the people of Northern Ireland and make a considerable contribution to the defeat of terrorism.

As to the detail of the estimates, I will start with the Department of Agriculture. The net provision sought in the two agricultural votes amounts to about £144 million. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley), will reply to the debate, so I shall not dwell on the details of those votes.

Vote 1 covers expenditure of some £35 million on those national agricultural and fisheries support measures which apply throughout the United Kingdom. In addition to certain pre-funded market support schemes under the common agricultural policy, the vote includes nearly £20 million for capital and other grants to assist structural improvements, such as grants to farmers for a range of effluent treatment, conservation and improvement works. A further £15 million is to provide support for farming in the less-favoured areas, by means of headage payments on hill cattle and sheep.

Vote 2 seeks provision of about £108 million in respect of the regional agriculture, fisheries and forestry services and support measures. Although it is a small amount, I draw the attention of the House to a new item. A token provision in these estimates of £1,000 is being made to open an account for payments to voluntary bodies engaged in activities designed to identify the needs of, and the means of assisting, deprived rural areas of Northern Ireland. Specifically, that will enable the work of the rural action project to continue pending the outcome of recommendations from the interdepartmental committee on rural development, established by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State earlier this year. That is a new item that will grow to larger proportions in time.

The next group of votes covers the Department of Economic Development. Vote 1 covers the Industrial Development Board's support and regeneration. About £111 million is sought to enable the IDB to carry out its vital work of industrial development activities. Hon. Members will be aware of IDB's record and its number of recent successes in attracting good quality inward investments to the Province, including Fruit of the Loom, Harris Laboratories and Data Design Laboratories from the United States. Only yesterday the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham), was able to announce another new project from Japan involving about 100 new jobs. We continue to attach a high priority to strengthening the Northern Ireland economy through such measures.

In vote 2 of the Department of Economic Development other economic support measures are provided, including about £143 million to provide assistance to the aircraft and shipbuilding industries. That is primarily related to the privatisation of Short Brothers and Harland and Wolff, which we have previously discussed. In addition, in vote 2 some £36 million is sought for the Local Enterprise Development Unit, Northern Ireland's small business agency. I had a lot to do with small businesses in my previous job and I am glad to say that that represents the highest-ever financial support for the agency and underlines the Government's commitment to helping small firms in Northern Ireland.

The House will be pleased to note that LEDU promoted 5,944 jobs in the last financial year, the highest in any year since it was established in 1971. That is a commendable performance. The resources sought will enable the agency to direct resources towards the development of established firms with growth potential and to encourage new enterprises.

Vote 3 of the Department of Economic Development covers expenditure by the new Training and Employment Agency—something of which I have also had experience on this side of the water. It has a budget of about £166 million, and undertakes a wide range of activities, including the youth training programme, the action for community employment scheme—the ACE scheme—the job training programme and the manpower training scheme.

The next group of estimates is for the Department of the Environment. Some £162 million is sought for vote 1, which covers roads, transport and ports. About £135 million of that is for the roads programme, the greater part of which is required to finance the operation and maintenance of the Province's road system. It also enables new construction and improvement works to be undertaken. A list of the major construction projects is contained in the estimates booklet. Preparatory work continues on the Belfast cross-harbour road and rail

[Mr. John Cope]

bridges project, with a view to starting construction in 1991. There is also an extended programme of structural maintenance work across the Province.

DOE vote 2 covers the important sectors of housing, for which £185 million is required, mainly to provide finance to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and to the voluntary housing movement. When the net borrowing by the Housing Executive to fund its capital programme, to which I have already referred, is taken into account, the Government's net public expenditure allocation for housing will be £243 million in 1990-91. That is supplemented by rental income and capital receipts, which will mean that gross expenditure on housing should be more than £500 million.

In the DOE's vote 4, £34 million is included for urban regeneration measures. Those are aimed primarily at improving the economic health and environment of districts that have suffered urban dereliction. As in previous years, the sums sought are expected to generate much higher overall investment through the successful public-private partnerships that currently exist in the Province.

The three biggest votes in all the estimates are for education, health and social security. For education, a total of £997 million is sought, of which the schools sector, vote 1, accounts for about 60 per cent. The total is up by more than 10 per cent. The resources will ensure that schools and teachers are properly prepared and have the necessary facilities to implement the reforms in the period up to 1992-93.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I understood the Minister to say that money would be available for the schools to meet the challenges in the reforms after 1992. One school in my constituency, Ráthmore grammar school, has already had 180 grade 1 applicants and has been unable to take any of the grade 2 applicants. The trustees are seeking mobile classrooms. Will that be permissible so that they can meet the needs in that district?

Mr. Cope: I cannot answer questions about a particular school off the cuff, but a total of £83 million has been set aside for the reforms in the period up to 1992-93. Obviously, the education and library boards are involved in all such decisions, as well as the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney).

Vote 1 also includes provision for salaries and the related costs of the 18,888 full-time equivalent teaching posts of the current year—a total of £384 million. That will maintain the planned overall pupil-teacher ratio at the present level of 18:3. There is also provision for lecturers in the institutes of further education, which will allow for about 30 additional lecturing posts from next September.

Expenditure by the five education and library boards will amount to £314 million in the current year, on the day-to-day operation of the education service in Northern Ireland. That is an increase of 9 per cent. over 1989-90, and includes special additions of £7 million for the maintenance of buildings and £3 million to improve standards of provision in the classroom. About £45 million is sought for education and library boards' capital provision.

In vote 2 of the Department of Education, £116 million is sought for expenditure on Northern Ireland's two universities, the Open university and teacher training. Vote 2 also provides for grants to the new youth council for Northern Ireland. That body has taken over the advisory role previously carried out by the youth committee, and is also responsible for assessing and paying grants to voluntary youth organisations.

The next set of votes relates to the Department of Health and Social Services. A total net provision of £940 million is sought for health and personal social services —partly in vote 1 and partly in vote 3. That is to maintain and improve the standard of the Province's health and personal social services. Much of it is for the expenditure of the health and social services boards, but £195 million is for the family practitioner services. Public expenditure on the health and personal social services programme in 1990-91 for the first time exceeds £1 billion in Northern Ireland.

The third of the very large blocks is social security. Vote 4 seeks £932 million for social security benefits—income support, housing benefit, payments into the social funds and family and non-contributory benefits. In addition, and outside the estimates, more than £800 million is spent on contributory benefits from the Northern Ireland national insurance fund.

Towards the end of the estimates there is one other small but important item to which I draw the House's attention, because it is a new vote under the Department of Finance and Personnel which I have the honour to look after and assist. I refer to vote 3, in which £1·25 million is sought for community relations purposes. When expenditure by the Department of Education is taken into account, it is planned to spend about £4 million on community relations projects in 1990-91. That includes £1·5 million to encourage cross-community contact; about £300,000 for the new community relations council, established in January to encourage and support those working to improve community relations; about £600,000 for a new programme to encourage district councils to promote improved community relations; and £1·4 million for the cultural traditions programme. The aim of improving community relations in Northern Ireland is shared by all and I hope that the House will be glad to see this new vote entering the estimates.

I have sought to draw the attention of the House only to some of the main provisions in the order; hon. Members will want to raise specific points to which my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will do his best to respond at the end of the debate, or, if they are very detailed, thereafter in the usual way. Meanwhile, I commend the order to the House.

7.32 pm

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): As is customary on these occasions, I thank the Minister for taking us so expeditiously through the order. He seems to improve every time he goes through the ritual and I certainly look forward to the next time he moves an appropriation order.

The Minister referred to the overriding importance of eliminating terrorism in the Province—a point that does not fall within the ambit of the order—and that is certainly a shared objective. Irrespective of the expenditure required, we all agree that the money must be provided to eradicate terrorism from both communities in the Province. There is no difference between us on that topic.

It is of paramount importance; the sooner we eliminate terrorism the greater will be the impact of the votes that we are discussing on the lives of ordinary people in Northern Ireland.

As the Minister also said, these votes are of real importance to the living standards of people in the Province. It is regrettable that terrorism—inevitably—grabs the headlines so that attention is not focused on these votes, but it is they which make life tolerable and often better than it was before. It is unfortunate that they do not receive due attention from the press or the House.

It seems only a few weeks since we last discussed an appropriation order. Despite what the Minister said this time, I recall that it was a wide-ranging order admitting of debate on most aspects of economic and social life in the Province. I do not want to bore the House, but it is necessary to remind hon. Members of one or two points that I made in that last debate.

The Minister may recall that I questioned the Government's approach to industrial development and urged them to introduce a proper strategic plan for economic development. I also urged a concentration of investment in human capital through training, and drew attention to the underlying poor performance of the economy in Northern Ireland. I do not mean to detract from the efforts that the Government have made or from what success there has been, but compared with the rest of the United Kingdom and with some of our major competitors in the European Community, and despite the progress that has been made, the underlying economic performance of Northern Ireland is still relatively poor and a great deal still needs to be done.

My final point in this catalogue of reminiscence is that I recall criticising the Government's complacency on all the issues that I have just mentioned.

I found it a little strange today that the Minister did not draw attention to the recent publication by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland entitled, "Competing in the 1990s: The key to growth". It sets out much of the Government's strategy for the Province and it appears to incorporate some of the suggestions that I made in our last debate. That may be purely coincidental—or it may have been to do with the power of my arguments.

I do not want to criticise the objectives of the document, but by no stretch of the imagination could it be called a strategic plan for economic growth. I hope that I am not being over-generous when I call it both timid and short-sighted. The document gave the Government the opportunity to outline a comprehensive economic strategy for development, for which many people, including the Opposition, have been calling.

The game is given away on page 6, which states:

"This paper does not set out to be a comprehensive economic development strategy".

Why not? It is what the economy of Northern Ireland is calling out for.

The whole flavour of the report is that Government intervention is essentially bad and should take place only when it is unavoidable. I notice the Secretary of State shaking his head at that, but I do not know whether he is agreeing with the flavour of my remarks or with that of his document, which gives the impression that Government intervention should be tolerated only when there is no other possible line of action. The document also clearly shows that the Government will continue to intervene in the economy only in the same grudging spirit that they have hitherto displayed. That augurs ill, as I have said on previous occasions, for the economy of Northern Ireland.

On the positive side, I certainly welcome the document's sectoral approach to investing in the economy. The Minister may recall that that was one of the points that I emphasised in our last debate—it is the way ahead. I also welcome the document's emphasis on training and investment in skills, but some of the Government's decisions in recent weeks and months will fundamentally undermine that approach to training.

The Government correctly place greater emphasis on the importance of a highly trained and motivated work force to economic recovery in Northern Ireland. Given the circumstances in the Province, it is right to stress the role of the youth training programme. To my mind and to the minds of many people in the Province, there are three fundamental concerns about the programme as it stands.

The first is a general concern about the arrangements for its funding, the second is the impact of the programme on further education, and the third is its impact on community workshops. The Minister of State will recall that the Government gave an undertaking that the levels of block funding would be based on last year's occupancy rates. The current figures show that there is a shortfall of £338,877 on the figure for last year. Will the Minister give an undertaking that it will be made good?

The correct and proper working of the system depends on the careers service assessing each young person leaving school to see what level of premium each is likely to attract. The evidence coming to me shows clearly that the careers service is either unable or unwilling to fulfil the role given to it by Government Departments in the Province. Inevitably, more of the training organisations are having to make the assessment and those that do not do so have to take on young people at the lowest level of premium. If that situation is seen to be widespread, I should like a commitment from the Government to look at the ability of the careers service to carry out the duty the Government have imposed upon it. If the Government conclude that the service cannot carry out that duty, the responsibility and the money that goes with it should be given to the training schemes.

The Government will be aware that private companies setting up to provide training are one of the growth areas in the Province. I do not criticise that, but I should like to see the private companies made subject to the same scrutiny that the Department of Economic Development applies to community workshops. If a great deal of training is carried out by private companies, those companies must be subject to Government scrutiny. Perhaps the Minister will assure us that the Department of Economic Development will be given the power to do that.

Under the old system, colleges of further education provided free training for people on youth training schemes. That is to be changed, and any training that is received in further education colleges will have to be paid for. The Government have given an assurance that that will not have a great effect upon people employed in colleges of further education, and I accept such an assurance at face value. However, there is evidence that the education and library boards are already trawling for 165 voluntary redundancies. That may be incidental, but I think that it is a direct consequence of the imposition of the new training regime.

[Mr. Jim Marshall]

Such redundancies may be just the tip of the iceberg. If the managers of the training schemes become reluctant to buy expertise from the colleges of further education and decide to provide more training in-house, it will have a knock-on effect on employment in colleges of further education. I am not necessarily a defender of teachers or lecturers in colleges of further education or even in higher education establishments, even though I used to teach in a polytechnic.

Jobs are important, but perhaps even more important is the standard of training. If the in-house training is of a substantially lower standard than that which is available in the colleges of further education, it will affect the expertise that is imparted to young people and will undermine the regime for new training. I urge the Government to keep that matter under review.

The Government will know that when the changes relating to community workshops were first discussed they produced anger and dismay among those who work there. The people in the workshops launched a campaign and the Government were prepared to make some concessions. I have a letter dated 1 February 1990 from the Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the hon. Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham). Speaking about modifications, the Minister said:

"There is three months advance funding payable on 2 April, guaranteed funding for one year amounting to 90 per cent. of each workshop's current overhead budget, and a substantial increase in premium levels 1 and 2. It is my intention that in the autumn"—

I think the Minister meant this autumn—

"my Department in co-operation with the Association of Community Workshops will organise a conference at which the community workshops network can give their views on the practicalities of the new arrangements."

The practicalities of the new scheme are already becoming abundantly clear. The number of workshops has fallen from 44 to 41 and those that have survived are in a parlous state. In many cases there is a severe shortage of money and that has forced an estimated 30 per cent. redundancy rate among the staff of community workshops. The workshops say that they claimed for the extra premium at the end of April on the basis of their April occupancy levels. They say that, despite assurances that the matter is being looked at by officials in the relevant Department, no additional payment has yet been made. I urge the Government to look into that and to do so urgently in view of the severe financial difficulties facing many workshops.

The Minister's letter referred to a meeting that was to be arranged this autumn. I understand that the meeting had been arranged for October but that the workshops have been informed that that date is no longer available to the Minister. I am not quite sure what that means, but it has started alarm bells ringing in the minds of those involved in community workshops. I should like assurances that it does not show any lack of determination on the part of the Minister to meet the people and to make progress in solving their problems and that, if the meeting has been postponed, that is purely because of a conflict of diary entries. I also hope that the Minister will carry out as soon as possible his promise—his obligation—to meet the representatives of the community workshops.

There is a feeling, rightly or wrongly, among those who work in community workshops that the Government want to see a reduction in their number, and are prepared to sit back and see community workshops go down one by one. I should like to hear the Minister's reply to that suggestion, and I should like him to reaffirm the Government's determination to support, and their commitment to, community workshop projects.

The estimates show an increase of 8·5 per cent. on the 1989-90 total gross provision for health. I know that Ministers delight in quoting that figure and, in their delight, imply that it will lead to great improvements in the Health Service in the Province. Our view, like that of most professionals in Northern Ireland, is that this increase is nowhere near big enough to meet existing unmet demand. The reality of the Health Service in Northern Ireland is more ward closures and longer waiting lists. At the Belfast City hospital, the waiting list is 112 per cent. higher than it was last year, and at the Ulster hospital it is 50 per cent. higher than it was last year.

In addition, the determination to proceed with rapid privatisation of certain aspects of the Health Service is proving an unmitigated disaster leading in many cases to dirty kitchens and unwashed linen. There has also been a massive increase in the number of unplanned hospital discharges because of the pressure on beds. Apart from the distress this causes, it is inefficient because these patients inevitably have to be readmitted. Rather than taking undue pleasure in the 8·5 per cent. increase in the health vote this year, the Government should be saying that, while this is a step in the right direction, greater financial resources will be provided, to make a real impact on health provision in the Province.

I have spent some time talking about the economy of Northern Ireland and the need for further action to increase economic growth. One growth area in the economy of Northern Ireland is in the consultancy studies being carried out into energy requirements and the future of the energy industry in the Province. In 1989-90, £391,000 was spent on the consultancy fees for such studies, but next year that will increase to £1,301,000—an increase of two and a half times. There we have an example of a growth industry. We must ask ourselves what kind of information and what kind of answers these studies will produce. I hope—I gather that this is likely to be a fruitless hope—that these studies will emphasise that the main problems in energy are generation and distribution rather than privatisation.

I understand that this year Northern Ireland Electricity is likely to make a profit of £50 million. I hope that that will be invested in improving the generation and distribution of energy rather than used to fatten up the cow for privatisation in the next 18 months or two years. There is an urgent need for the replacement of old switchgear, particularly in Belfast. I recognise that it cannot be done overnight and that even that £50 million will not be sufficient to pay for the replacement scheme. However, Ministers should be emphasising to the chairman and the members of the board, and the managing director, that, whereas in the Province switchgear is replaced in a cycle of 50 to 60 years, in the rest of the United Kingdom it is replaced in a cycle of 20 or 30 years. We should be encouraging a change to the shorter cycle.

We know that the capacity generated by the power stations in Belfast and Derry will cease in the next 10 years. This was a subject that came up at the last Northern

Ireland questions. To replace that capacity, the Government have decided to go for Kilroot 2 and the interconnector between the Province and Scotland.

I hope that Ministers will give us more information about this. At the last Northern Ireland questions, the Under-Secretary gave me an assurance on this, but I repeat the appeal that I made to him: will the Government publish their analysis of the energy requirements for the Province so that an informed discussion can take place before final decisions are taken? The Opposition are not convinced that the best configuration for the supply of electricity for the Province is the completion of Kilroot 2 —although we support completion of that facility—and the interconnector between the Province and Scotland.

My last point is on one of my old hobby horses—lignite, the one indigenous pure fuel resource in the Province. It is regrettable that it is not likely to be exploited in the foreseeable future. I would find it regrettable if the exploitation of lignite was sacrificed on the altar of short-term expediency.

I understand that a consortium in Northern Ireland is seeking to obtain private capital to finance a lignite-burning station. Has the consortium approached Government Departments in the Province? If approaches have been made, what has been the response of Ministers? If it is considered feasible to build a lignite-burning power station in the near future, it would be regrettable if the project were to be abandoned purely because of the decision to which the Government may have come over Kilroot 2 and the interconnector between the Province and the United Kingdom.

Rev. Martin Smyth: The hon. Gentleman referred to sacrificing the exploitation of lignite on the altar of short-term expediency. Does he agree that it would be wrong if the environment of Northern Ireland were sacrified for a quick profit for the producers of power through the burning of lignite, especially when we consider the devastation of parts of eastern Europe?

Mr. Marshall: Of course. I agree with the hon. Gentleman. That is why I asked for the publication of the information that is in the Government's possession. The hon. Gentleman will know that one of the problems with coal-burning power stations is sulphur emissions. I want to know if the possible expenditure of £200 million has been included in the figures that are available to the Government. That would be the sum required to provide scrubbers for the elimination of sufficient sulphur from existing power stations in the Province. Until all the information, including all the figures, is available, none of us will be able to make any definitive statements or reach any conclusions on the methods used to generate electricity in the Province.

I am sorry to have detained the House for so long. My speech would have been two minutes shorter had it not been for an intervention. You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and Northern Ireland Ministers will be pleased to know that, as is customary on these occasions, it is not our intention to divide the House on this latest anniversary of the appropriation order debate.

8.3 pm

Mr. Clifford Forsythe (Antrim, South): I shall keep my remarks reasonably short, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am glad to say that there are more of my hon. Friends who wish to contribute to the debate this evening than on a previous occasion. In other words, I am pleased to welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble).

On 14 October 1971, the Payments of Debt (Emergency Provisions) Act (Northern Ireland) became law in Northern Ireland. It was a response to the rent and rate strike and a special procedure to circumvent the strike. It enabled deductions to be made from benefit payments for debt, even without the debtor's permission. During the consideration of the measure before it became an Act it was clearly stated that the sooner the rent and rate strike ended, the sooner the Act would lapse. That was in 1971, and it is now 1990. However, the emergency measure is still in existence. Even today, tenants who have their houses disrupted by repairs or improvements are refused redecoration grants because they are in rent arrears. In other words, workmen disrupt an entire house and the tenant is unable to redecorate because the Northern Ireland Housing Executive holds on to the money that would have been made available in the form of a redecoration grant because of the tenant's arrears.

Electricity consumers who have cleared their arrears still have deductions made from their benefit payments because the accounts department, or the Housing Executive, fails to cancel the original order at the Department of Social Security. Today, almost 20 years after the Act took its place on the statute book, direct deductions are still being made from wages and benefit payments. The Housing Executive continues to withhold redecoration grants. Even court claims are withheld so that ordinary civil debt can be cleared. No attempt is made to investigate the needs or circumstances of those concerned. The Act makes no provision for the examination of personal financial circumstances. Nor does it provide a formal right of appeal against the level of deductions from income or benefit.

I repeat that in May 1990, almost 20 years on, the Act remains in force, even though the emergency which prompted its enactment has long since passed. Anyone who reads the debates on the measure before its enactment will agree that it was never intended to be used for ordinary civil debt. The Secretary of State should repeal the Act as soon as possible and restore a little dignity to the lives of those who are forced through circumstances to get into unwanted debt.

I have been encouraged lately by the efforts being made by the Department of the Environment to improve living conditions and the general condition of the countryside in Northern Ireland. There is a seemingly small but increasingly frustrating problem of untended grassed areas. Unfortunately, the planners or designers of estates require builders, especially private builders, to leave a certain space for grassed areas, or for trees, bushes and shrubs. These areas become a wilderness because no one seems to be responsible for them. Those who pay £40,000 or £60,000 for their homes find that outside their door there is an area which ultimately becomes a dump because no one will take responsibility. The local council will say that it is not its responsibility and that it is not required to look after those pieces of ground. The Department of the Environment seems to have no responsibility because these areas are left by private builders. The planning department will say that it required the builder to leave the open space within the estate, but that it is not responsible for keeping

[Mr. Clifford Forsythe]

it in good order. Anyone who becomes involved in such an issue finds himself going round the various authorities in a circle.

With our interest in the environment, surely some method could be devised whereby the local council is given sufficient funds to keep grassed areas in good order. I believe that the Minister responsible for these matters should give careful attention to such a scheme. Public representatives are frustrated because they seem powerless and unable to get anything done. Those who live on the estates are similarly frustrated.

A problem of the past, which seemed to disappear, is now rearing its head again for various reasons. It arises when a developer does not make up the road to the required standard to be taken over by the Department of the Environment. People may be living in homes for three years with an artificial lake outside the door where there is supposed to be a road. When the Department is approached it says that it is very concerned and has a bond which it will use. Unfortunately, bringing the bond into operation seems to be such an unwieldy process and seems to take so long that everyone gets frustrated. I understand that if the builder comes along after being threatened with the bond and puts in two or three kerb stones, the Department will not use the bond. That is a terrible loophole. Will the Minister get the Department to study the problem and tighten up the rules so the object of the exercise, the bond, can be a means of taking action quickly if the builder does not fulfil his obligations?

Another problem, which may seem minor in this honourable place, is the Housing Executive's reaction to broken windows. In certain areas recently windows have been broken by vandals—or perhaps I should use the term "thugs". I know of homes in which all the windows have been broken by thugs, for whatever reason. If tenants go along to the Housing Executive and say that they have had all their windows broken by a crowd of people who they do not know, the Housing Executive will say that it is nothing to do with the Housing Executive because of the agreement with the tenant which means that the tenant has to put in new windows. If the tenant goes to the police, they will say that it is a matter for the Housing Executive —obviously, the police cannot replace broken windows. Such vandalism is bad and the Housing Executive or the Department of the Environment should consider whether they can help the people affected and perhaps transfer them to other areas.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Is my hon. Friend aware that tenants on some estates have had their homes repeatedly damaged month after month? Many are pensioners and have been transferred to new accommodation only to go through the same experience again, and they cannot afford to replace windows. The problem must be addressed as a matter of urgency by the Housing Executive and the Minister must approve changes to meet their needs.

Mr. Forsythe: I completely agree with my hon. Friend as this is a serious problem in some areas. On rare occasions, people are helped. It is bad enough having all the windows broken and being threatened without having the further problem of not being able to find the money to put in new windows or to have them boarded up. The problem must be considered as quickly as possible.

Perhaps the Minister is as disappointed as I am at the delay in the Slaght crossing inquiry. I am well aware of the legalities of the situation and that there may be good reasons why the inquiry has not got off the ground as soon as we should have liked—indeed, I know there are good reasons. However, there was an accident at the crossing and there are a number of similar crossings in Northern Ireland with a history of accidents. Unfortunately, the general public are still unaware of what happened. I have met the inspector of the inquiry—a sensible and responsible person who takes a serious view of the matter and has made great efforts to do whatever is necessary —but we still do not know what happened. People are very anxious about the matter and many people now take much greater care at such crossings.

Video cameras were installed at three open crossings in the Province. I understand that the cameras were installed to monitor the performance of, or conduct at, the crossings. I have two questions for the Minister. First, were the cameras installed because of fears about what was happening at those or at other crossings? Secondly, is there a video recording from each of those cameras which could be used to show what happened, or are the cameras monitored visually every day, without a recording being taken? I hope that the Minister will give an explanation.

I have asked the Department whether any fully automatic or half-automatic barriers had been changed to open crossings in the past few years. I understand from answers given to me that no crossing had been changed in such a way, but I understand from other information—albeit not official—that two crossings were changed from either full or half-automatic barriers to open crossings. Will the Minister tell me officially in the House whether that is so?

I am pleased at the great improvement in the international airport in Belfast. The airport is of a high standard and we look forward to the standard being higher, but I have one niggle of concern—that the airport is being fattened up, to use the expression used earlier by the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall), for privatisation. I am interested to know who will be involved in such a privatisation. We have a say about it in this House, but if the airport is privatised we may not be able to influence the running of the airport in quite the same way.

As for the Department of Finance and Personnel—vote 1, A11—we read on page 147, dealing with the international fund, that

"This subhead covers the administrative costs of the Fund."

They amount to £343,000. The running costs come to £248,000. Grant in aid amounts to £93,000. I ask the Minister to spell out what it costs the United Kingdom taxpayer to administer the international fund.

8.20 pm

Mr. James Kilfedder (North Down): I echo the point made by the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) about community workshops. I am fortunate to have a splendid community workshop at Bangor in my constituency. The staff are enthusiastic. When I visited it I was greatly impressed by those who had enrolled. My experience of that community workshop leads me to

believe that encouragement and help must be given to similar workshops. I should deprecate any attempt by the Government to reduce the number of community workshops in Northern Ireland.

I echo what was said by the hon. Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe) about Belfast airport. The travelling public are treated disgracefully, particularly by British Airways. It treats its passengers like cattle at the London end. That is unacceptable. It is high time that proper services were provided at Heathrow so that passengers could walk straight on to aircraft. There should be no more excuses when delays occur because there are no back-up aircraft.

I, too, welcome the new Member of Parliament for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble). I remember the last occasion when I had a long talk with Harold McCusker, his predecessor. On that occasion he came to have dinner with me in my home. I shall always remember his great courage and spirit, despite his illness. If the new Member of Parliament for Upper Bann carries on the tradition that was followed by Harold McCusker in this House, he will do well by his constituents.

The first speech that I made in the Chamber was a passionate plea on behalf of the elderly. I believed then, as I believe now, that our senior citizens, after long years of work either in the home or in factories, shops or offices, have earned the right to dignity and comfort at the end of their lives. What I said then is true today: those who have reached retirement age ask for certain basic rights, such as an adequate pension. I made that point when I last spoke in an appropriation order debate. National resources should be provided so that people who can no longer cope in their own homes can be cared for properly.

Most elderly people prefer to stay in their own homes. That is often possible only if they are provided with domiciliary help. If that is impossible, they have to seek sanctuary in residential or nursing homes, which should be supervised and inspected regularly if we are to ensure that the elderly are treated properly and with compassion.

Many years ago I drew attention in an Adjournment debate to the plight of those who look after an elderly or sick father or mother. It is usually the daughter who forfeits the prospect of marriage to devote herself completely to the constant daily care of a parent. At that time such total dedication went unrecognised and unrewarded by the state, even though vast sums of public money were saved because those elderly people did not have to be taken into care.

A recent survey published by Crossroads, a worthy organisation that deserves the respect of the community, emphasised that half the 6 million people in the United Kingdom who look after elderly relatives at home are at breaking point. It confirms that many carers who have given up work to look after frail parents feel like prisoners in their own homes. It is a physically demanding and stressful task that in many cases isolates the carers from the outside world. Those people—who, as I have said, are usually daughters—can lose contact with friends and acquaintances and the organisations to which they formerly belonged. Because of their total commitment to their elderly father or mother, they become thoroughly demoralised and worn out. What undermines their great spirit, which we all recognise, is the lack of recognition of their dedication and the Government's failure to provide adequate support for them.

Residential care for the elderly in the United Kingdom costs about £1 billion annually—a considerable sum of money. Such a staggering sum makes it imperative to encourage, wherever possible, the care of the elderly in their own homes. However, the carers, many of whom give up their jobs and marriage prospects, must be paid properly for looking after an elderly father or mother, or a sick or handicapped relative.

I refer also to the treatment of pensioners. Since the changes to the social security regulations, pensioners who formerly were in receipt of supplementary benefit now find that, because of the slight increase in their pension, they no longer qualify for rent or rate rebates. That has put an additional burden on many pensioners.

I have raised with the appropriate authorities the fact that many pensioners have to pay the full television licence fee. Pensioners who live in warden-controlled accommodation benefit from paying only a nominal television licence fee, whereas pensioners who do not live in such accommodation have to pay the full fee. That anomaly has been made worse. Pensioners who move into accommodation where residents benefit from the concession are forced to pay the full licence fee. It is wrong that we should treat our senior citizens in that way. Pensioners living alone or with another pensioner should have the benefit of free television. It is their window on to the world; it provides them with entertainment and, above all, it gives them companionship. It is high time that the Government recognised that justice should be done and that pensioners should be allowed to watch television without having to pay a single penny.

I am concerned about the proposed privatisation of electricity. I have already warned the Government to keep their hands off our electricity—the electricity of the people of Northern Ireland. It would be wrong to put it into private hands as that would create a monopoly. Northern Ireland is not the same as the rest of the United Kingdom where there are several electricity suppliers. Here in England there is a supply of natural gas which has been denied to the people of Northern Ireland. Even now, perhaps with the prompting of the Common Market, the Government should provide a gas pipeline to the island of Ireland. Perhaps such a pipeline should run from the Morecambe fields to the territory of Northern Ireland and gas could then be supplied to the Irish Republic.

It would be completely wrong to sell Northern Ireland's electricity supply industry as Northern Ireland already suffers from expensive coal. The price has recently been increased by 50p a bag, or £10 a tonne, which represents an unacceptable increase compared with the price charged in the rest of the United Kingdom. It is high time that we had an investigation into the cost of living in Northern Ireland which is higher than it is in most parts of Britain.

The Government are very strong on pollution. In the past year or two they have become very green and have dedicated themselves to improving the environment. But it is no use just talking about improving the environment; we want action. Quite apart from places such as Antarctica where international action is needed to turn the territory into a world park and save it from speculators and polluters, the Government need to ensure that raw sewage is not dumped into Belfast lough and is not dumped off the coast of North Down. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) would agree that the sewage from Belfast should not be dumped into the sea and washed up on to the coast by the tides or the

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winds. It pollutes the entire coastline of County Down. It certainly creates great resentment among those who live in Bangor, Ballyholme and Orlock who see signs of sewage and other debris along the coastline. We need a commitment from the Government that they will build a sewage works, no matter how costly it may be, so that raw sewage is no longer thrown into the sea.

Finally, to refer to a matter in Holywood—not Hollywood in California but Holywood, County Down in my constituency. That is the development at Kinnegar, an estate on the coast at Holywood. I appeal to the Minister and to the House for support on behalf of the families who live at Kinnegar. They oppose, as I do, the use of the old gas works site for light industrial or office development. They have waged their campaign of opposition for well over a year and I have been closely identified with it from the start. I wrote to the Department of the Environment on a number of occasions urging that the site should be preserved and retained as a recreational area for the people and children of Kinnegar.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you have not had the good fortune to visit Holywood. It is a lovely, ancient place. I see the Government Whip, the hon. Member for Stevenage (Mr. Wood), nodding in assent. I have the impression that he has travelled further afield than Kinnegar and may have visited County Armagh recently. If he comes to Holywood, he will find it and the rest of my constituency of North Down a pleasant place with a lovely environment and marvellous people, most of whom—perhaps I should not say most, but a sufficient number—vote for me. Pray God that in the next general election, despite the intervention of a Conservative candidate, those people will still vote for me, knowing the years of service that I have given my constituency of North Down. That was the start of my election campaign.

Holywood lacks all the recreational facilities that are to be found in other large towns and cities in Northern Ireland and that is unfair. Holywood has been passed by and that is why the old Kinnegar gas works site should be preserved. But sadly, despite all the objections by residents and all the protests that I have made, the site was sold and planning permission has been granted.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Richard Needham): Perhaps I can help the hon. Gentleman by saying that the Conservative mayor of North Down came to see me yesterday about that very issue, drawing attention to the letter that he received from the hon. Gentleman. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that I will look most carefully at his point about Kinnegar.

Mr. Kilfedder: I am puzzled by what the Minister said because I have not written to the Conservative candidate. I have certainly written to one of the Environment Ministers—I cannot recall which, so I shall opt for the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley), who wears glasses and has a kindly face. I have written to Ministers about Kinnegar, and if I wrote to the Minister with the kindly face I hope that I shall get a kindly response.

Despite all their protests and complaints, the people of Kinnegar have been totally frustrated. Their opposition has been ignored and bureaucracy seeks to treat them with impunity. I warn the Department of the Environment that those worthy people have not given up and on their behalf I appeal to both Ministers to reward their endeavours and restore faith in the democratic process by intervening in this issue.

I pointed out in the past that the ordinary citizen is at a grave disadvantage in attempting to oppose a planning application. If an application for planning permission is refused, the person making the application has the right of appeal to the planning appeals commission and can employ a high-powered barrister or Queen's counsel to push his case. Once a planning application is granted, an objector has no such right. It does not matter how many objectors there are, because they have no such right. I have urged the Government to amend the law and to provide objectors with a right of appeal. The case of Kinnegar confirms the need for such a right if justice is to be done.

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): The hon. Gentleman will be aware, from his previous life as Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly, of a proposal made by the environment committee which was accepted by the Department. It changed the planning regulations to the extent that the Department was willing, provided that two thirds of a council opposed a planning application, to hold an article 22 inquiry. The difficulty has often been that the Department has held on to applications until the two months within which an article 22 inquiry must be called have elapsed. A change in the legislation extending that period would help councils to ensure equality between objectors and applicants.

Mr. Kilfedder: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. That shows the worth of the Northern Ireland Assembly and of the various statutory committees, including the environment committee, of which the hon. Gentleman was the distinguished chairman. It is right to praise those who deserve it, because there are a number in this House who deserve no praise.

The developers at Kinnegar have obtained permission to build seven office units of approximately 5,000 square feet per unit with car parking for 125 cars. They estimate that 300 people will be employed in the proposed units. It is perfectly clear that such a development will substantially increase traffic and service and delivery vehicles. There is a real and grave problem: the entrance to the Kinnegar estate is a small road, and even without that development it is often blocked by security forces' vehicles or ordnance vehicles from the Army barracks at the end of the Kinnegar estate. In addition to the military vehicles, which block traffic, sewage tankers travel daily through the estate.

A local public house—I know that the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) does not approve of public houses—has obtained planning permission for an extension, which will generate more business, people and cars. I pity the people who will live in that area, with all that development and traffic and danger to their children. The area is already congested. Surely it is planning madness to allow that office or light industrial development to proceed. What about the rights of the ordinary people who live in the area, in particular the young people, for whom a recreational area would be of inestimable benefit?

8.44 pm

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): I understand that it is customary for me to begin by paying tribute to the previous Member for Upper Bann, which I do gladly. Mr. Harold McCusker can be aptly summed up as a man of the people. He worked extremely hard for the people of Upper Bann and cared deeply for their welfare. I know from canvassing in the recent by-election that he was held in high regard and with deep affection by the people of Upper Bann. Harold, characteristically, was a fighter. He fought for those people and he fought in personal terms. His illness would not have been so prolonged if he had not fought so strongly against it. As many hon. Members know, Harold's surname literally means "a son of Ulster", and he was a son of Ulster. He was conscious of the soil from which he sprang and the traditions of the area and its people.

The Upper Bann area is proud of its Unionist heritage, and many elements within the area express that heritage. I had some pleasure in reading a recent publication by the Public Record Office, edited by David Miller. Hon. Members will be familiar with his earlier work, which was extremely enlightening, on Unionism and loyalism. That publication included a copy of the account by Colonel Blacker of the formation of the Orange Order, of which I am proud to be a member. We find within it not only the Armagh area—sometimes the Armagh people, it being the County of the Diamond, forget that other counties contributed—but particularly in the west Down area. I am thinking particularly of the Bleary boys who contributed to that and to the successful defeat of the 1938 rebellion shortly afterwards.

The Unionist heritage of the north Armagh area is in some ways epitomised by the statute of Colonel Saunderson, which stands in the centre of Armagh. I shall refer again to Colonel Saunderson in a way that is particularly apposite to other matters.

Upper Bann is significant not only for its Orange heritage but for the way in which its character was formed largely through the plantation processes of the 17th and early 18th centuries. The major towns in the area are plantation towns. We see that from the contribution of the Brownlows to the creation of Lurgan and of the Warings to Waringstown and other towns in the area.

That plantation had a significant heritage in other repects, because directly from it sprang the Ulster custom, which after the Ulster land war of the 1770s provided a basis from which the industrial revolution was able to occur. The industrial revolution in Ulster, which was centred on the Lagan valley, was an indigenous growth. Ministers may be interested in this, because it owed nothing to Government contribution or significant landlord patronage. It was indigenous and arose out of the customary rights that the tenants had won for themselves. We find the traces of one of the first major industrial developments in the area—the textile industry—through the middle Bann valley, running from Gilford down to the town of Banbridge, which lies in the centre of the constituency.

During the recent by-election in Upper Bann, attention focused on the intervention of what are called national parties. I want to reflect on that for a moment. I mentioned Colonel Saunderson, whose statue stands in the centre of Portadown. The inscription refers to him as the leader of Ulster's Unionists in the House for more than 20 years. As hon. Members will know, he first sat in the House as a Liberal, representing the constituency of County Cavan, and in the 1880s was returned for North Armagh, including Portadown, as a Conservative. Of course, he is noted as the leader of the Ulster Unionists.

The term "national parties" which has been bandied about in recent times is misleading. It was misleading for some people who call themselves Conservatives to intervene in that election and call themselves the national parties. They claimed that their arrival was something new. Of course it was not new. Nor are they right to refer to themselves as solely national parties as distinct from provincial parties. We in the Ulster Unionist party are the British national party in Ulster. We were formed historically by an alliance between Ulster Liberals and Ulster Conservatives, with Ulster Labour representatives too, to combat Irish nationalists. We are the national British parties in Ulster. In that context, one must put a large question mark against the aims and motives of a group calling itself Conservative which contested the election with, it seemed to us, the object of dividing and diminishing the Unionist voice and, by so doing, diminishing the voice of the British people of Ulster.

Since my arrival in the House, several hon. Members have expressed to me their regret at the decision of the Conservative party to contest the Upper Bann election. I did not regret it during the election. While canvassing, I repeatedly told the electors that the election was an opportunity for them to vote against the policies of the Government. The results show that the electorate of Upper Bann seized that opportunity with both hands. Hon. Members will not need to be reminded that the candidate representing the policies of the Government scored a total of 2·9 per cent.—less than 3 per cent.—of the valid votes cast in the election. That is a clear rejection of the policies of the present Administration. That demonstrates—indeed, it confirms, because we had demonstrated it on many previous occasions—that the policies pursued by the Northern Ireland Office have no mandate from the people of Ulster. That is significant.

People cannot say that a majority elsewhere in the United Kingdom in favour of the Government's policies legitimises those policies. A clear distinction can be drawn between Northern Ireland and, say, Scotland. In Scotland, where again the Government have no mandate for their policies, they can say that their policies are applied on a Great Britain basis and that they have a majority in Great Britain. However, the policies pursued in Northern Ireland are applied, not on a United Kingdom basis but specifically to Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland is treated differently from the rest of the United Kingdom and its constitutional status in the kingdom is diminished.

A mandate for the Government's policies can be obtained only from the people of Ulster. Clearly that mandate does not exist. In the light of that, the only honourable course for the Government is to reconsider their policies and accept the offers made by my colleagues to extricate them from the position in which they have put themselves. They should adopt policies that reinforce the position of the kingdom of Ulster within the kingdom.

At least the Conservative party came to seek a mandate in Upper Bann, even though that mandate was refused. I listened with interest to the speech of the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall). I find his detailed interest in matters relating to Northern Ireland interesting. I agreed with several of the points that he made. Surely he

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must find it a little strange to take such a detailed interest in Northern Ireland matters and discuss them at length in the House when he belongs to a party that not only does not contest elections in Northern Ireland but refuses people in Northern Ireland the right or opportunity to join it. A member of a party which deliberately boycotts the people of Northern Ireland must surely find it inconsistent to take such a detailed interest in Northern Ireland.

Tonight we are discussing the Appropriation (No. 2) (Northern Ireland) Order 1990. The measure is dealt with in the form of an Order in Council. Order in Council procedures are less than satisfactory. Indeed, that is an understatement. The hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) referred a few moments ago to defects in the planning legislation on article 22 inquiries. As hon. Members will know, a planning and building regulations order has been tabled and is shortly to be debated. If that was legislation dealt with in the normal way, the hon. Member for Belfast, East could table an amendment to provide a remedy for the defects to which he referred. Of course, he cannot do so. That is not right. The procedures should not operate in the way that they do. Significant changes are needed.

I support the comments made by the hon. Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe) on the Payments for Debt (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act (Northern Ireland) 1971. Order in Council procedure is objectionable partly because it is described as temporary. It is a temporary procedure stemming currently from the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1974 and originally from the Northern Ireland (Temporary Provisions) Act 1972. One wonders what the meaning of the word "temporary" is in that context.

That is even more appropriate in the context of the point raised by the hon. Member for Antrim, South. He dealt with a temporary measure introduced in 1971, which is still operating. Not only is the measure objectionable because it was a temporary measure which lasted 19 years, but the provisions made for deduction of benefits under the Act were made as the result of administrative action.

I should have thought that hon. Members who are interested in the rights of persons subject to the law of the United Kingdom would want people's property rights determined in the courts or through some form of judicial procedure, rather than civil service actions. Civil servants may decide to withhold benefits in order to pay debts owed to other persons. That is particularly strange when, through the Enforcement of Judgments Office and its provisions for attachment of earnings and other assets, procedures have to be followed and some independent judgment is placed between the debtor and the creditor by the operations of the enforcement officers.

Surely, at least on those grounds, something should be done. Even if it is still felt necessary to make deductions from people entitled to claim benefit, surely something should be done to enable people to make representations before a third party. It would be appropriate to provide something analogous to the procedure for enforcement judgments.

My first point about the order concerns planning policy in the Craigavon district. That area is unique in Northern Ireland as the only area that does not have in force a development plan or area plan. The original, non-statutory plan, which is now some 20 years old, is not relevant, because the position has changed drastically in the past 20 years, with the failure of the new city project contained within it. In that area, we are operating with the detritus of the new city project.

While canvassing during the election campaign, I was struck by the desolation of the estates in the central Craigavon or Brownlow area. I hope that some thought has been given to planning policies that could help to regenerate that area. I was also struck by the way in which many areas of the town of Lurgan have been badly blighted because of road proposals which, I am told, have since been abandoned. Again, I hope that some serious planning policies will be evolved to regenerate those areas.

I was also struck by one of the consequences of the 1960s housing policies which I hope will not be repeated. I refer to the not very well built medium and high-rise flat developments. Nearly all the developments that I saw were semi-derelict and unoccupied. They were eyesores and worse—especially in the Portadown district, where properties that were originally constructed by the local Housing Executive have been bought by the tenants under the right-to-buy procedures, which the Government encouraged.

The owners have found that, to some extent, their properties have been devalued by the derelict medium-rise flat developments just across the road. I hope that some urgent action will be taken on that. I was told by the occupiers—the purchasers—that they had been told by the executive that they would have to wait two or three years simply for a decision on the flat developments, let alone for any action to be taken.

My second point about the appropriation order relates to the community relations cultural traditions programmes. As the Minister said, the programmes are being expanded considerably. That is a good thing, and I very much welcome the existence of those programmes. However, I should like an assurance that they will be genuinely representative and even-handed. I must confess to being uncertain about the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council. Technically, it is not a Government body, although in the first instance all its members have been appointed by the Government. It has been given a budget of £300,000. We must ask, how was the body formed? How representative of the community are the people who serve on it and how balanced is that representation? It seems that that representation does not rise above the level of tokenism as far as the majority tradition in Ulster is concerned. Many of the people who serve on it cannot be regarded as truly representative.

Finally, I refer to an item of expenditure relating to the Northern Ireland Assembly. I note that there is a provision for £274,000 to be spent—over £200,000 of which will be spent on maintaining a cadre to provide the basis for an Assembly, should one be called in the future. I welcome that expenditure because there is a great need for representative institutions in Ulster. Hon. Members will know that there is a virtual absence of representative institutions and that what are called "local authorities" are not really what are normally understood by that term. They rarely get above the level of English parish councils. There is a huge gap between them and this House. We need representative institutions.

Although I welcome that expenditure on the Northern Ireland Assembly, I do not want my comments to be taken as implying my approval of the proposals in the Prior Act —the Northern Ireland Act 1982. I am not sure that those

proposals ever were workable. If we ever have an Assembly—or devolution on any significant scale in the future—I hope that it will be much more substantial than that of the Northern Ireland Assembly, if it is to be regarded as worthwhile devolution as distinct from what is essentially local government restructuring, which is another matter.

Devolution is said to be the Government's policy. I find it curious that a Government with that policy have not made any proposals that would advance that policy. That is to be contrasted with the experience or the actions of the Ulster Unionist party because it is now almost two and a half years since the Ulster Unionist party made detailed proposals for developments in Northern Ireland to the previous Secretary of State, to which there has not yet been any response. The Government do not make any proposals of their own. Their attitude is passive. If we were to have discussions on the proposals, I suspect that the Government would not advance any proposals of their own, but would simply adopt the role of picking holes in the proposals of ourselves and others.

I wonder why that should be the case. I suspect that, despite its protestations to the contrary, the Northern Ireland Office actually prefers the present position. I suspect that it does not really want devolution, but prefers to sustain the present direct rule. Under that system, it is effectively insulated from any form of democratic control. Ministers can speak for themselves, but civil servants in the Northern Ireland Office give the impression that they are not really interested in devolution, and that they enjoy the freedom from accountability that direct rule gives them. That is another reason for ending direct rule at the earliest opportunity.

9.4 pm

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): Let me take this opportunity to welcome the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) to the House. I welcome him not only as a Conservative and Unionist, but as a Roman Catholic. I had the opportunity of joining him for lunch today, and found him a charming and clubbable individual—in the nicest sense of the word—and I wish him every success in his political career.

The hon. Gentleman bears a grave and onerous burden: he follows Harold McCusker, who was held in great affection by his constituents and in the House. Harold McCusker spoke for his people with courage, honesty and decency, from his heart. The courage that he showed when fighting illness was the same courage as he showed in fighting the men of terror and violence. I remember hearing him say on many occasions in the House that he had carried more coffins of friends and relatives than any other hon. Member. That is something I know that the new hon. Member for Upper Bann will never and should never forget.

The hon. Gentleman raised a minor note of controversy. There is a convention that a new Member should not have too much of a go at his parliamentary opponents in a maiden speech. From my mere seven years' experience in the House, I can say that although he was heard in silence—as is the convention—he may not be next time. It is not always wise to attack one's parliamentary opponents, especially on both sides of the House—that is asking for trouble.

I remind the hon. Gentleman that this is a Parliament of the United Kingdom. If he really wants—I trust that he does—to represent the views of the people of Upper Bann, he will not come here only to debate matters relating to Upper Bann and Northern Ireland, but will participate in and legislate on United Kingdom matters. If anything can bring the Province to a degree of normality within the United Kingdom, it is the prospect of the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues doing just that.

I know that this is not a debate about the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and I shall not be sidetracked on to that, but one can only be encouraged by the constructive and helpful comments on television this morning by the leaders of the Democratic Unionist party and the Ulster Unionist party. I know that there have been many false dawns and graveyards of expectation, but for the first time for ages there appeared to be a united voice, and a flexibility on the part of Government and the major Ulster parties. That is to be welcomed, and the House will wish them luck.

The major recruiting ground of the IRA must be unemployment, and I pay tribute to Ministers in their crusade against it. The seasonally adjusted figure for unemployment in the Province in March 1990 was 98,400: that represented a decrease of 10,600 compared with March 1989, and a decrease of 26,900 compared with the peak of 125,300 in October 1986. In March 1990 seasonally adjusted unemployment stood at its lowest level for more than seven years, since September 1982. That is a major step forward.

There is also good news for the young unemployed because, since March 1989, unemployment among 18 to 24-year-olds has decreased by 5,053. The number of persons unemployed for more than one year, the long-term unemployed, has decreased by 7,447. The number of employees increased by 8,390 between December 1987 and December 1989. That is a key figure. Credit must be given to my hon. Friend the Minister for the work that he has done on this front.

The investment now coming into the Province is another key factor. Earlier my right hon. Friend the Minister of State mentioned some recent IDB successes which reflect the continuing progress of inward investment. About 5,000 new jobs have been promoted by the IDB during 1989-90 and 40 per cent. of those jobs are connected with new investment from outside Northern Ireland. The total investment associated with various new projects amounts to a record £440 million and the IDB contribution towards that investment works out at 21 per cent.

There have been some spectacular examples of inward investment. On 18 December 1989 the O'Connell Development company of Massachusetts announced its major participation in a £65 million investment in Londonderry. Current and programmed commercial investment in Belfast city by the private sector totals £450 million on top of the £120 million spent in the past five years. A significant proportion of that investment comes from Great Britain, including £75 million for the Castle Court retail, office, car park development. That is a tribute to what Ministers, the Department and the Government are doing.

There are many ways in which one can defeat terrorism and, apart from any political solution, one of the best is an economic solution. That means providing jobs, investment and a good standard of living in the Province. That is why I am happy to support the Government estimates tonight.

GREAT BRITAIN HOUSE OF COMMONS
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)
1989/1990

Published on microfiche by Chadwyck-Healey Ltd
Cambridge Place
Cambridge CB2 1NR
England

Distributed in the USA by Chadwyck-Healey Inc.
1101 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
USA

Date of publication: 1991

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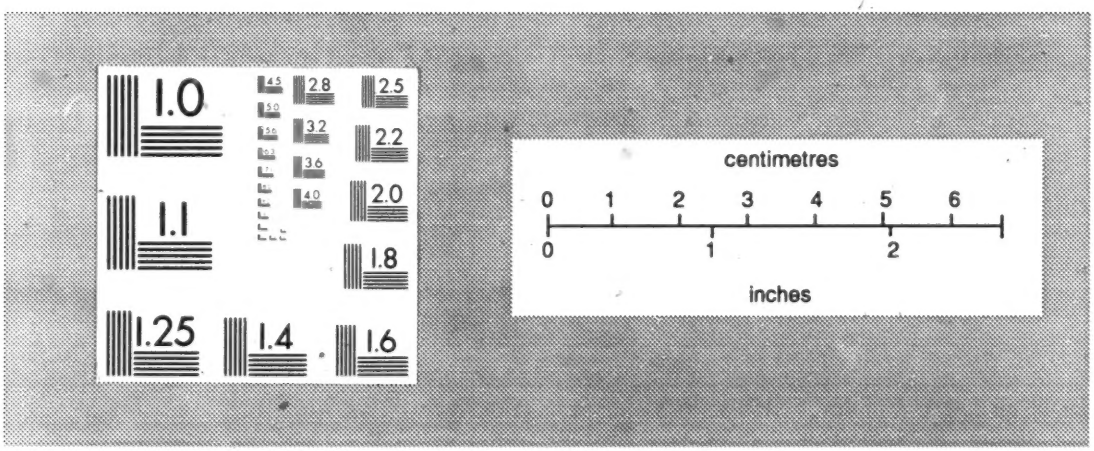
Technical data: Film type: positive silver halide, archivally permanent microfiche processed to AIIM and BSI standards.

Producing laboratory: Chadwyck-Healey Microform Publishing Services



9.12 pm

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute tonight. My first pleasurable task is to join in the welcome to the new hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble). I compliment him on the content and eloquence of his speech. Although we shall, undoubtedly, have considerable political differences, none the less I am sure that there are many matters upon which we shall be able to work together for the mutual benefit of our constituents, especially as we represent contiguous constituencies.

It is appropriate, if the House will forgive the pun, that the first vote in the appropriation order is to the Department of Agriculture for which the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State is responsible. I was intrigued tonight by the announcement of a new account involving the princely sum of £1,000 for rural development. That is a mind-boggling concept, but no doubt it will be explained when the Parliamentary Under-Secretary replies.

The Minister is well aware that rural development is a particular passion of mine as I represent a rural community. I hope that the Minister can give us some information regarding progress made by his committee on rural development, which was formed in January this year, and the consultations that it has undertaken in order to promote a programme for rural rejuvenation. The committee has had contact with various district councils. I also refer him to the new committee of the Housing Executive with special responsibility for rural housing. Will he ask his committee to join forces with CRISP, the body set up by the International Fund for Ireland, which is seeking advancement in rural development and would be prepared to put money into it? Because of all the bodies involved, I fear that the whole project may be bogged down in administration and consultation and that, once again, although lip service is paid to the concept, nothing will happen in practice. I hope that the Minister will devote his energies to ensuring that we have a practical rural improvement and regeneration programme.

It will not surprise the Minister if I refer next to fisheries because I have made many representations to him and have asked him to use his good offices to expedite the capital improvement of Ardglass harbour, which is the only one of the three fishing ports in Northern Ireland —Kilkeel and Ardglass in my constituency and Portavogie in Strangford—without meaningful capital development of its harbour. The Minister has had the project from the Northern Ireland Fishery Harbour Authority since early in the year and I am disappointed that work did not commence on it, as anticipated, in April. My constituents would be receptive to an announcement in his reply to the debate tonight that work is to start. From the look on the Minister's face, I do not think that that is likely. I urge him to make the announcement soon because unless work is started on the project now it will have to be postponed for yet another year. The fishermen of Ardglass suffered enough last winter without their boats being endangered for another winter.

I wish to refer to part of my constituency which from prehistoric times has been known as the granary of Ulster, the east Down cereal-growing area. Cereal producers in south Down are paying the co-responsibility levy although they are net importers. They have to import, with high transport costs, but at the same time they have to contribute for over-producing. It is a paradox which should be eradicated as soon as possible so that they may have a better income from a precarious occupation.

I was interested in the complimentary remarks of the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) about economic development and job promotion. I pay tribute to the Department of Economic Development, to the Industrial Development Board and to the Local Enterprise Development Unit for the activity in which they are engaged, but I suggest that the cake which is being baked is not being distributed to all. I was horrified to note from answers to parliamentary questions that in the three years 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89 the Industrial Development Board had brought inward investment companies to my constituency on only seven occasions. That is an indictment—there should be equal opportunities for all the people of Northern Ireland. Over the same period, 316 jobs were created by the various agencies. That is 100 per year, which is less than 1 per cent. of the unemployment figures for South Down.

I know that it is difficult to direct inward investment to certain areas, especially as it is scarce because of our other problems. None the less, it would be flying in the face of the statistics not to be worried that a proper direction is not being taken. Will the Minister ensure that the prospect of inward investment opportunity is given to my constituents, just as to other districts in the Six Counties?

The Minister will know that I was particularly enthusiastic when the Department engaged in a programme of fibre optic link developments, now known as the Star programme. I had great hopes at that time that the introduction of fibre optic links would give rural districts such as South Down and other rural areas of Northern Ireland the opportunity of providing what are known as back office operations in rural communities that are sensibly situated, designed and built. I urge the Minister that the Department, and particularly the Industrial Development Board, should place more emphasis on achieving inward investment of that nature, which is just as economically rewarding as the more industrially and production-orientated inward investment companies.

It appears that there is a great danger of becoming bogged down in administration. The Star task force was inaugurated, comprising representives of the Department of Economic Development, the Industrial Development Board, the Local Enterprise Development Unit, the technology board for Northern Ireland, Queen's university and the university of Ulster. If the Minister can get all those organisations to agree to an immediate course of action, he is a better man than I. The time has come for action to be taken abroad, particularly in Europe and the United States, for the transfer of back office operations into the local areas served by fibre optic links.

The other great industrial job creation potential of an area such as my constituency, and indeed Northern Ireland as a whole, is that of tourism. I must again register my criticism at the lack of a serious cohesive drive to present other regions of Northern Ireland in a comprehensive way. My constituency is unique—it has natural and man-made facilities, environmental assets, historic content, ruins and traditions. Those could all be easily packaged to be promoted as another method of attracting tourists from abroad.

I urge the Minister to consider the issue of encouragement and, if necessary, aid for the provision of

bed accommodation, particularly in districts such as my constituency of South Down. The obvious and easy method is that of farmhouse accommodation development, which has the dual purpose of job and wealth creation, while at the same time creating income for the rural community. It is tragic when one compares Donegal and Down, at opposite extremes of the north of Ireland. Every crossroads in Donegal has bed-and-breakfast or tourist-approved bed accommodation, but in my area there are virtually none, and the only accommodation is highly priced. That market is no longer available for tourism generally. A small family seeking holiday accommodation want attractive, local, cheap farmhouse accommodation.

Other hon. Members have referred to the energy, electricity and gas industries. There is a great danger that in the north of Ireland we might have priced ourselves out of industrial competition in terms of energy charges. It was correctly pointed out that coal has gone up by £10 a tonne. Even more important in terms of industrial development is the enormous increase in the standing charge for electricity. I do not know whether it is a fattening-up process, but it certainly costs the industrialists a considerable amount—22 per cent. last year, 8 per cent. this year, a total of 30 per cent. in two years. Inward investing industrialists would certainly look at that closely.

The concept of rural planning is badly applied in many areas, both in principle and in practice. The principles of planning are not adhered to in any regular manner which would be intelligible to the layman. An important aspect in rural development and in the preservation of the integrity of rural communities is the fact that planning permissions in rural locations are almost always granted for second homes to wealthy people coming in from the cities. As a result, the available sites cannot be used by the indigenous population—by the sons and daughters of local farmers and villagers. The planning department must engage in a policy of setting aside certain areas either for the provision of public housing or for low-cost housing for local people, so that the sons and daughters of farmers and villagers have the chance to build houses there and live in their own environment.

In the context of rural preservation I am appalled at the news just published that 13 primary schools in the maintained sector in my constituency are up for closure, and it seems that in Closkelt, Ballyward, Leitrim, Gransha, and Edenvale, 13 state primary schools are also up for the chop. If that happens, entire rural communities will be wiped out in a couple of years in one fell swoop. If that is paralleled in the maintained sector, it augurs badly for any attempt to stabilise the rural communities of Northern Ireland. It is not a question of money—it is a question of will. The fundamental provision of primary school education in the community is the factor that makes a community gell. The schools are not just teaching institutions but centres to which communities look. They are used as social and recreational bases and are pivotal to village and community life.

I ask the Minister to ensure that the fullest possible consultation takes place with local people—not just with education boards or with the Catholic maintained schools committee, but with the people who will be deprived of institutions which have existed for more than 150 years. If the 20 or 30 closures in my constituency go ahead, Northern Ireland Departments will be able to forget about rural population maintenance because the centres on which the communities are founded will have disappeared.

9.28 pm

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): I am thankful, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I have caught your eye in this important debate. However, the competition to speak is not as great as that which usually faces Northern Ireland Members. At most, 13 Members of a House of 650 have been present during this debate on the expenditure of public funds of £2,496,546,900, and that is a disgrace. It is easy for Members who call themselves the national party, as they did in the election a short while ago, to tell people how interested they are in Northern Ireland. There are three Conservative Members and one Opposition Member in the House. That certainly says something. Perhaps there is not so much competition to speak because we are not on peak-time television. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) was included in the 13 hon. Members that I mentioned.

Mr. Beggs: Does the hon. Member agree that it is reasonable for Northern Ireland Members to expect those hon. Members who try to squeeze us out at Northern Ireland Question Time to be here? Where are they? Perhaps they will take note of the debate and desist from the temptation to ask questions that are handed to them by party Whips. That is done to fill space and prevent Northern Ireland Members who have serious matters to address on behalf of their constituents from being called to ask questions.

Rev. William McCrea: I wholeheartedly agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs). I am certain that the Northern Ireland Office and Northern Ireland Ministers have something to do with many of the planted questions. If one looks carefully at the *Official Report* of the last Northern Ireland Question Time and at some of the prepared questions and prepared answers, one sees that in one case the answer given was not to the question that was asked but to the one that followed it. The detailed answer would certainly lead Northern Ireland Members to think that, in the run-up to a by-election, some hon. Members wanted to pretend that they had a special interest in internal matters in Northern Ireland. They asked about issues such as licences and breathalysers. They asked about little matters that many hon. Members on this side of the water would not have known about had they not been handed details of them.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Peter Bottomley): Before we are diverted too far from the order, it is worth making two or three small points. The hon. Gentleman thinks that an interest in breathalysers is in some way connected with the Upper Bann by-election. That is an insult to the electorate of Upper Bann. If the hon. Gentleman had been watching me for the last four years, he would have realised that questions about such matters have not started recently.

If the hon. Gentleman would like a planted question, he should have a talk with me, because many interesting bits of information could be placed on the record. It is occasionally useful to have an hon. Member put down a question and it would be useful if we could have a deal about that. Before the Upper Bann by-election campaign, at one Northern Ireland Question Time only half the

[Mr. Peter Bottomley]

Northern Ireland Members put down questions. Perhaps we could remind each other of the right time to put down questions, because that could lead to a better spread.

Rev. William McCrea: I thought that the Minister's intervention would turn into his winding-up speech, and that he had changed his timing. I do not think that the questions about breathalysers had a personal significance for Upper Bann. However, Conservative Members had to ask questions about something and they asked about matters that were relevant to Northern Ireland.

I would be delighted to find a genuine interest in the affairs of Northern Ireland. Interesting questions have been asked on other occasions, but it is strange that tonight the Chamber is almost empty. The Government have a majority of over 100 but only four Conservative Members are present. That shows that something is wrong and I hope that that will be noted by the electorate. The Minister and the Whip have to be here to carry on the business, and that means that only two Conservative Members are willing to be here. That is strange when one bears in mind that we are talking about £2,496 million of public money. Therefore, I have to put a question mark over the sincerity of those hon. Members. I am sure that the Minister will agree that it is rational for me, or any other hon. Member representing Northern Ireland, to question this, bearing in mind the recent heightened interest in the affairs of Northern Ireland shown by Conservative Members.

I am delighted to have the opportunity to address the House on a matter of considerable importance, because financial aid to Northern Ireland is vital for us. Vote 1 for the Department of Agriculture deals with marketing and processing and vote 2 with scientific and veterinary services. While I welcome the aid given to farming, which is the largest industry in my constituency, I must express the alarm and dismay felt by farmers in Northern Ireland about the effect of the BSE scare on Ulster meat exports. What is known as mad cow disease has already resulted in the cancellation of an order for meat from the Province to, for example, a German market chain because of the inability to obtain BSE-free certificates.

Farmers in my constituency and in the Province as a whole find this strange. They believe that they are being victimised because of the high incidence of BSE in Great Britain. They find it strange, as should the House, that the disease has a special relationship with constitutional boundaries. The meat plants in the south of Ireland can call their product BSE-free, yet the Department of Agriculture in the north of Ireland cannot do the same for meat there. Is this just a United Kingdom disease, is it something that attacks British cattle, or does it stop at Auchnacloy and immediately start at Castlederg?

This is a serious matter, and I am sure that the Minister will remember that it is most serious, because farmers in the Province will go to the wall. The veterinary section of the Department should intervene and get Northern Ireland special status within the United Kingdom. If this needs to be argued in Brussels, I trust that Ministers will promise the House that this will be done. It is a known fact that, on the mainland tonight, butchers are advertising "BSE-free meat from Ireland". Where is it coming from? The Minister should know that one of the realities of life is that there is a great deal of smuggling across the border. Northern Ireland farmers will have to go to the south, where they are happy to take the meat and sell it to the mainland with this stamp on it. That cannot be right or permissible.

Northern Ireland is suffering for something for which it is not responsible. As the Secretary of State said yesterday, at the agriculture show, there is little incidence of BSE in the island of Ireland as a whole. However, from the way that the media have put it, one would think that, although there was no incidence in the south of Ireland and some in Northern Ireland, as the latter is part of the United Kingdom, there must be rigid control on the cattle in Northern Ireland.

It is all very well for the Minister to tell us that the Department of Agriculture spends money on marketing and processing, but there can hardly be marketing and processing because of the situation of the Northern Ireland farmer. It is a serious matter and one that has nothing to do with boundaries. Northern Ireland farmers produce the best standard of British beef and I believe that that beef should be exported throughout the world. We in Northern Ireland are proud of our farming as a whole.

How is the Department of Agriculture succeeding in encouraging set-aside on arable land for alternative farming and non-agricultural purposes? Does the Minister believe that the present grants are attractive enough to encourage such diversification?

Does the Minister agree that the Government's policy is that the private sector should be the major vehicle for economic regeneration in the Province? How does he view the present state of manufacturing and other parts of the business fraternity within the private sector, following the dramatic fall in employment in manufacturing over the past decade? The private sector is dominated now by service industries.

Has the Minister studied the report of April 1990 from the Northern Ireland Economic Council? Is he deeply concerned that the Northern Ireland private sector is small when compared with that in the rest of the United Kingdom and that manufacturing firms within the Northern Ireland private sector are themselves small? The report states:

> "The private sector will have to be able to adjust to rapidly changing technological and market conditions with greater success than has been evident in the past."

Can the House be assured that the Government will act constructively in a supporting role as the private sector seeks to prepare itself for the challenge of 1992? To ensure that that happens, the Government must consider additional incentives. Does the Minister feel that all the necessary financial resources are available to him and to the Department to rejuvenate Northern Ireland's industrial base?

I represent an area of high unemployment. Part of my constituency has the second highest unemployment rate in the United Kingdom. I am sure that the Minister will understand that my constituents are concerned about the economy and its relevance to their lives in future. As I come from an area which is in the west of the Province, I am sure that the House will understand my concern about the jobs that have been created recently and their siting.

I ask the Government to give careful consideration to areas in the west of the Province such as Mid-Ulster, which has suffered so much from industrial neglect. Surely the Government can promise my constituents that fresh efforts will be made to encourage industrial development

in Cookstown, which has the second highest unemployment figure in the entire United Kingdom. Will similar efforts be made to ensure that industrial development comes to Omagh, Fintona, Dromore and last, but by no means least, Castlederg, which has suffered great deprivation? Special incentives are needed.

I fear that there will not be a fair share of the jobs that are being created for the areas to which I have referred. I ask the Minister to take account of the jobs that have been created recently and exactly where they have been created. They have not been of great assistance to my constituency. I welcome all jobs but the Minister will understand me when I say that I must beseech the Department to consider providing special aid to the constituency of Mid-Ulster.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I think that what I am about to say will fit into the debate more appropriately at this stage than in my reply. The hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) recognises that a partnership with Ministers can assist in getting investors, especially those from overseas, to consider developments in areas with which they are not necessarily familiar. Not everyone overseas will have heard of Cookstown, although it matters greatly to the hon. Gentleman and to me.

We are talking about a partnership, but if Ministers say, "Have you thought about Cookstown?", and the first thing that happens is that, when people get to Cookstown, they buy the local paper and discover that Cookstown council is not talking to Ministers, it will be difficult. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman could quietly talk to some of the people that he is associated with to try to overcome some of the apparent prejudice. It is not for me to ask people to come to see me, but a united front can be of some advantage to promote the area, as people in many other areas have realised.

Rev. William McCrea: I doubt whether the first thing that the major industrialists of the world do is buy the *Mid Ulster Mail*. I would like to think that they did but I must in all honesty say that I think that the Minister is pushing it too far and trying to score points for himself.

Certainly there are people in the Cookstown area who belong to other political parties which seem to have an open door to and the ready ear of the Minister, but that has certainly not helped Cookstown much. Therefore, let us not play a little game in which the Minister and the Northern Ireland Office seek to score points with Cookstown council. In the past, Omagh district council has had discussions with the Minister. I am talking about the deputation from Omagh. Why did that not bring prosperity and thousands of new jobs to the district? The Minister is pushing the wrong point. He must understand that there are differences of opinion and that people in Northern Ireland have been incensed by the way that the Government have dealt with their constitutional rights.

The Minister could demonstrate his openness and fairness by saying that the Government will no longer force upon the people of Northern Ireland something which is totally against their will but that, for a change, they will listen to the will of the ballot box. The lesson of the election in Upper Bann will have to be learnt.

The hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) made an excellent speech this evening and I congratulate him on his address to the House. I trust that he enjoys his tenure of office as the Member of Parliament as much as his predecessor, the late Mr. McCusker, who I believe enjoyed representing the good people of Upper Bann.

I ask the Minister to go beyond the political arena and to appreciate the need for industrial devlopment in Mid-Ulster. The unemployed are members of the Province-wide majority community and of the minority community. I want the Minister to take the issue away from the political arena. We must get away from a headcount of whether people are nationalist or Unionist. I want to see an industrial base in Cookstown, Omagh, Fintona, Dromore, Castlederg and all the other little towns. The Minister could proudly take credit for that, if he so desired at a future date, and say he played a part —not the whole—in ensuring the prosperity of people in my constituency.

As regards outside investment, there will have to be special incentives for industrialists to come to the west of the Province, or the number of jobs will continue to stagnate. The Minister has to bear in mind that industry will stay near the ports. The hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) is correct to say that the spread of jobs —I welcome all jobs—shows that some areas have not been touched or there has only been a smattering of jobs throughout a large part of the Province.

I have the privilege and the honour to represent the west of the Province. I trust that the Minister will accept that I am genuinely asking the Government to intervene on behalf of industry and future industry in my consitutency. Has research been carried out into industrial development in the areas to which I have referred by the Industrial Development Board or the Local Enterprise Development Unit? If the Minister has up-to-date information, I should appreciate it if he could send it to me. I hope that it will be good news for my constituency.

As for the Department of Economic Development, I am disappointed that the attempts to encourage tourism have not been co-ordinated. According to the explanatory note to vote 2, grants towards the provision, extension and improvement of hotels, guest or boarding houses and self-catering establishments have been reduced from £1,229,000 to £829,000. I ask the Minister to give the reason for that considerable reduction in grant aid.

Mr. Beggs: We all appreciate the recent investment in hotel development in Northern Ireland, but the fact remains that those whom we should like to visit Northern Ireland in greater numbers will be unable to afford to stay in such high-standard accommodation. Ought not the Government to consider providing assistance so that those who can afford to pay only modest rates will be able to find accommodation? The strength of the tourist industry in Northern Ireland was built upon coach tours. Northern Ireland is losing out on that trade. We shall be unable to get back unless we provide accommodation for those people.

Rev. William McCrea: I agree wholeheartedly. We must build up that trade again, but we shall be unable to do so with a budget of the size that we are dealing with in this debate. It has been greatly reduced.

According to vote 3, part of that money is provided for the loan of special aids to registered disabled people who require them in order to obtain or retain employment. According to the special provision for assistance to disabled people who are in employment or seeking

[Rev. William McCrea]

employment, there are job introduction schemes and capital grant schemes for adaptations to premises and equipment. However, that grant has been reduced by £90,000. Something is radically wrong if cuts have been made in the employment grant schemes for the disabled. This is the time to expand, not to cut, those grants.

Under vote 5, which covers expenditure by the Department of Economic Development, I must enter a plea on behalf of both industrial and private users of electricity. I trust that the Department will stop fattening the goose for privatisation. The Province can do without the privatisation of the electricity industry, bearing in mind the higher living costs in the Province. That is one privatisation which the Government can do without, and I trust that the Minister will take note of that.

I find the expenditure on assistance to the gas industry under vote 5 rather strange. Rather than trying to assist the gas industry it appears that the Government are trying to bury it, or, as the hon. Member for South Down would probably say, give the gas industry the last rites. At this late stage, will the Government change course and ensure that the proposed gas pipeline between Great Britain and the island of Ireland is routed to a location in Northern Ireland? Surely it is essential that the British people of Northern Ireland should share the national asset of natural gas. I am sure that the Minister understands that the people of Northern Ireland feel that the Government have let them down. I trust that the Government will bear that in mind and take some action.

I have to draw to the Minister's attention some issues involving the vote on the Department of the Environment that concern certainly my constituents and, I am sure, the constituents of other hon. Members representing Northern Ireland constituencies. I note that the all-party House of Commons Environment Committee is probing conservation in the Province. I welcome the visit and the investigation by the Committee, and I trust that it will do all in its power to preserve the countryside.

However, I must draw the Minister's attention to a matter of grave concern to my constituents in Mid-Ulster —the Rio Tinto Zinc operation outside Omagh in County Tyrone. A motion will be tabled in the House and I trust that it will be signed by right hon. and hon. Members concerning the environmental and social implications of that multinational gold rush in Cavanacaw, Omagh, County Tyrone. It is disgusting that a large trench has been dug in the countryside, of which my constituents gave me some photographs yesterday. I believe that the operation has continued for a year without a licence and that the Government have now granted the company restrospective planning permission.

Are the Government giving the company an unofficial nod and wink? Are they not genuinely concerned about the environmental and social implications? That huge trench has been dug only 140 m from human habitation, necessitating the removal of 40,000 tonnes of farmland. All members of the local district council representing the wide spectrum of political parties within that council have been unanimous in expressing their opposition to the project. Will the Minister ensure that the truth about the project is known, that the company does not get the land by deception or on false pretences and that the pollution that concerns many people in the area will cause the Department to intervene as a matter of urgency?

What knowledge does the Minister have? The operation is on the verge of a scenic wildlife preserve. It is disgusting that the Government have given the company a nod and a wink and then, after a long delay, have granted retrospective planning permission that would never have been achieved had the company approached it in the proper way. However, the company went ahead. It seems to pay to railroad proposals through against the will of the people and their elected representatives.

I asked the Minister to clarify the matter. If he has no particular knowledge of the operation, I trust that he will look into it. If he goes to Cavanacaw, he will be able to look into it, as it is certainly big enough. He will have to stand to one side, or he will drop into it. Seriously, it is causing great concern and I trust that the Minister will bear that in mind.

Under the Department of Education vote, will the Minister confirm that the budget allocated for nursery school places is sufficient to meet the needs of the community? What proportion of the child population is receiving nursery education? What representation has the Department received on this matter, and what response has been forthcoming to meet the concerns that have been expressed by parents in the Province?

Will the Minister comment on the evidence given to a conference yesterday that repair and maintenance bills for Ulster schools will eat up the bulk of Government cash earmarked for education reform? That has caused much consternation within the education fraternity.

There have been recent press reports of school closures. I wholeheartedly agree with the hon. Member for South Down on this issue. Whether it be the maintained school or the controlled school, there is much concern in the rural community that the promises of curriculum support for rural schools will not be kept.

Home help services have caused much concern to my constituents. The pensions given to our pensioners are inadequate, given the higher cost of energy and food in the Province. They are on a meagre pension. It is disgraceful that they are left to live on the breadline, bearing in mind that many of them grafted hard to build the Province into the industrious place that it is.

Will the Minister give a categoric assurance that the citizens of the United Kingdom, particularly of Northern Ireland, are not suffering because of the financial burden of the sight test? I should be interested to hear what he has to say about that.

I am delighted to have had the opportunity of raising these matters, which concern our constituents, under this wide appropriation order. I trust that the Minister will give us some pleasure with answers that will at least bring a little enjoyment to our constituents.

10.3 pm

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Right hon. and hon. Members are aware that all the elected representatives of constitutional parties in Northern Ireland reject the Order in Council procedure. It is a most unsatisfactory and increasingly unacceptable method of dealing with Northern Ireland business.

I am delighted to welcome my Ulster Unionist colleague, my hon. Friend the Member for Upper Bann

(Mr. Trimble). I congratulate him on the content and presentation of his maiden speech and join him in paying tribute to his loyal and courageous predecessor. I wish my hon. Friend every joy and satisfaction in a worthwhile parliamentary career. He enjoys the support of the majority of his constituents, having gained 59 per cent. —20,547—of the votes cast. The Conservative challenger polled less than 3 per cent. and received only 1,038 votes. The Alliance candidate was almost wiped out. Votes for that party fell from the 1987 election level by 1,439 to a 948 low. The Right to Vote Labour candidate polled 235 votes and the SDP candidate received 154. All the mainstream mainland parties lost their deposits along with other parties.

The two other Unionist candidates received more votes than the Conservative party, the Labour party and the SDP. Surely that is a clear message. As has already been said, it was a total rejection of the policies imposed on the Northern Ireland electorate. I make those observations to emphasise the solid support of the Northern Ireland electorate for candidates who are entirely opposed to the Anglo-Irish diktat and the Order in Council procedure.

As a matter of urgency, there should be a determined effort to establish proper procedures for dealing with Northern Ireland business at Westminster, and such procedures should largely replace Orders in Council. At the same time, establishing democratic institutions in Northern Ireland and giving the elected representatives of constitutional parties there increased responsibility would show that the enthusiasm for democracy expressed openly in the House in welcoming the replacement of communist regimes in eastern Europe is also applied to restoring democratic rights and equality of treatment within the United Kingdom for British citizens in Northern Ireland. Will our Government and the Opposition recognise the repeatedly expressed wishes of Northern Ireland Members for an end to Order in Council procedures and to many Northern Ireland Office policies?

I refer briefly to votes 1 and 2 for the Department of Agriculture. I welcome the continuing support for the marketing, production and processing of agricultural products. Northern Ireland farming families, the industry and the Department of Agriculture have worked steadily over the years to produce high quality food products that meet the ever-higher standards demanded by consumers. Will the Secretary of State and his other Ministers continue robustly to defend the meat industry and the health status of our livestock produce against the unscientific speculation that has caused unwarranted anxiety here in Great Britain? Will he reassure consumers that Northern Ireland food products are safe and that the Department of Agriculture scientific and veterinary service is adequately resourced to ensure consumer safety? Does the Minister agree with Dr. Verner Wheelock of the food policy studies unit at Bradford university, who was reported in the *Belfast Telegraph* as saying:

"The way in which the authorities in England are reacting in taking British beef off the menu for fear of BSE is quite stupid"?

Many hon. Members on both sides of the House would probably concur with that statement.

Will the sums voted in the order be adequate to cover costs that might be incurred if emergency measures become necessary to cope with exports lost temporarily as a result of scaremongering? Has the Department of Agriculture yet offered help to the Northern Ireland Meat Exporters Association and to meat plants?

With reference to votes 1, 2 and 3 for the Department of Economic Development, I pay tribute to the work of the hon. Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham) in concluding negotiations with the Japanese company, Ryobi Ltd., which will eventually provide about 100 jobs in Carrickfergus in my constituency. I share the concern that has been expressed by other hon. Members about the scarcity of jobs and job creation schemes and their feeling of loss when new opportunities are located elsewhere. If we face that problem jointly and encourage more investment to Northern Ireland, we hope that in the near, rather than in the distant future, it will be possible for areas that are not benefiting at present to achieve a fairer share of inward investment. As the constituency Member of Parliament, I am delighted to welcome that Japanese company to Northern Ireland.

I am sure that the Minister will agree that the excellent industrial relations record of responsible trade unionists, and the availability of a highly educated, trained, skilled, industrious and versatile work force, backed by the support of the Industrial Development Board, will, together with an outstanding environment, and any number of attractive locations from which a company can choose to locate, continue to make Northern Ireland attractive to other overseas investors.

I am sure that the Minister will also agree that, although grants help to attract and encourage inward investment, many of those who take the decision on where to locate do so for other reasons. Grant considerations come later. Again, I pay tribute to the enthusiasm of the hon. Member for Wiltshire, North who went an extra mile to give support to that new inward investment.

I ask the Minister to take a closer look at the provision of management training in Northern Ireland with a view not only to raising the standard of our management expertise, but to providing increased opportunities and a greater number of places on management training courses. As we get new investment, we shall need more and more management expertise.

I sincerely support the aims and objectives set out in the framework document for the Training and Employment Agency. I know that other hon. Members from Northern Ireland will be watching its progress carefully. We hope that that body will be successful in helping to ensure that employees in Northern Ireland have an attractive range of skills and expertise that will enable them to benefit from new employment opportunities.

Vote 3 relates to the community workshops. Unlike the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall), who referred to the problems experienced by community workshops, I shall be direct and simply ask the Minister to tell us the Government's long-term policy towards them. is there a timetabling target for reducing those schemes? It is thought in some quarters that the assurances and guarantees given by the Minister are not being honoured in the same spirit by officials, who have diluted them.

How many of those workshop schemes have already been forced to close because they cannot operate under the new funding arrangements? Will the Minister assure the House that adequate support is available on request to assist workshop providers to manage the limited resources

[Mr. Roy Beggs]

allocated to them, and endeavour to ensure that payments for claims submitted from the workshops are speeded up as much as possible?

The hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) referred to the provision for the disabled in the same vote. In my experience, disabled people want to help themselves, and we have a duty to provide the resources to enable them to do so. With more funding, more could be done.

Let me again register a protest about the fact that consumers in Northern Ireland are being denied choice in the type of energy that they wish to use. They are also being denied access to cheaper natural gas. It is not good enough to blame past records of gas used; the gas produced in Northern Ireland has always been too expensive. Consumers in Northern Ireland should be given real choice and access to a natural gas supply. I ask the Minister to give serious consideration to making choice available, and to seek EC funding to provide a cross-channel link to Northern Ireland from the British gas grid. Can he tell us whether the words

"assistance to the gas industry"

—in vote 5—would permit an assessment of the cost of a pipeline to Northern Ireland from Morecambe bay or the Scottish coast to be carried out?

Teachers in all schools find that the administrative demands arising from the education reform programme are impinging on their teaching time. For most conscientious Northern Ireland teachers, it also impinges on their out-of-school time. Can the Minister, at the earliest opportunity, consider further reducing pupil-teacher ratios in Northern Ireland, and making available more discretionary posts to area boards for distribution to schools where a need for extra part-time support has been identified? Can he also give an assurance that curriculum demands arising from the reform programme will not force the closure of all small schools serving isolated rural areas, and that the Department of Education and Science will make every effort to retain viable education in our rural areas?

Many parents are annoyed that in the current transfer procedure their children are unable to obtain places in the school of the parents' first choice. Parents in the Craigavon area claim that they have no real choice. The Minister should consider closely the validity of that claim made by people who feel aggrieved. I should also appreciate it if the Minister would tell us what arrangements there are to permit parents who are dissatisfied with the outcome of the transfer procedure to appeal.

I record my support for the case made by the hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) for improved pollution control and an end to the dumping of sewage off our seaboard. It is absolutely disgraceful that the Department of the Environment in Northern Ireland has still not made provisions in my constituency and others to end the practice of disposing of raw sewage into the sea. My constituents make no distinction between untreated sewage and chopped-up sewage. They do not want it dumped in the coastal area and the rich fish harvest damaged or contaminated in any way. I trust that steps will be taken to help us to improve further the tourist attractiveness of the area, which is already deemed to be one of outstanding natural beauty, by ensuring that proper sewage farms are in place and that our coastal waters and beaches are free from pollution.

Ministers responsible for the environment and economic development should also get together as quickly as possible to discuss how to solve the blight and the eyesore created by the limestone works in Glenarm village. That village is deemed to be worthy of conservation, but it and the surrounding area have been contaminated and polluted by limestone dust. I sincerely believe that the company is prepared to bear its share of the cost of relocation. It would greatly enhance our attractive Antrim coast road if those works were relocated.

Before we next meet to discuss an appropriation order, I trust that positive steps on some of those issues will have been taken.

10.22 pm

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): Before I comment on the draft appropriation order, I join others in welcoming to our Chamber the new hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble). I do so not for the sake of convention, but because I genuinely welcome him here.

The hon. Gentleman and I have known one another for many years. In the past 20 years we have served on many committees and spoken together on many platforms. Those of us who heard his fine excellent maiden speech will recognise that he will bring a considerable knowledge of the law not only to his party but to others and that that will aid deliberations in this Chamber. He has brought commitment, ability and conviction on Unionist principles to an area which had a tremendous constituency Member.

Having fought the by-election, the hon. Gentleman will be aware of the high regard that the constituents of Upper Bann had for the former Member. He will know, therefore, that he inherits a constituency which has been well looked after and that he also inherits a mission. It was the dying wish of his predecessor that the Anglo-Irish Agreement should be destroyed and that an acceptable alternative should replace it. The hon. Member for Upper Bann will willingly lift up that torch and fight the same cause for his constituents.

The hon. Gentleman has our best wishes as he commences his parliamentary career. I agree with so many of his remarks that it is impossible to go over each one, but I noticed how carefully he chose the terminology of representative institutions. The Province is so bereft of democratic structures at any level that it is clear that more responsibility needs to be put into the hands of locally elected representatives. The hon. Gentleman will have seen from his short experience of the House the exceptional way in which Northern Ireland is dealt with. He referred to a planning instrument, which I will deal with later, setting up an entirely different procedure for Northern Ireland from that for other parts of the United Kingdom. Having heard his colleague the hon. Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe) talking about grass cutting in his constituency and about broken windows in public sector housing, he should not feel in the least embarrassed in following his hon. Friend down that road, for this is one of the few opportunities that we have to raise those nitty-gritty, bread-and-butter issues in the House. No one in any other chamber has an opportunity to raise them.

The debate may not lend itself to cramming the House full of interested listeners, as happens at Question Time. I,

too, wish that the Tory Whips, when planting questions, would at least ensure that hon. Members can read the questions properly, instead of muffing them, as happened recently. We are happy to see Members from other parts of the United Kingdom taking a genuine interest in Northern Ireland issues—we just wish that they would spread their interest more evenly over the deliberations on Northern Ireland.

On the appropriation order it is usually best to make most of one's remarks on the subject matter which is the responsibility of the Minister who is to reply to the debate. One has a better chance of getting answers because he does not have to consult other Ministers, and one does not get the standard reply. "My colleague will write to you." The Minister should know the answers to all the questions. As a member of East Belfast conservative association, the Minister will want to do everything possible to assist the people of East Belfast. If he does not, I will tell them that the Conservative party will do nothing for them. If he does something, however, I will tell the people of East Belfast that I have done something for them, too, so he cannot win either way.

Vote 2, expenditure by the Department of the Environment on housing services, comes under the Minister's environment portfolio. I want to talk about one housing estate, Mertoun Park, which is on the boundary between my constituency and that of the hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) and on the periphery of the city of Belfast. The residents of that housing estate, which was built six or seven years ago and consists of about 106 houses, feel that they have been forgotten. The houses are good, but the estate is deplorably designed. It is so badly designed that the in-house architects for the Housing Executive refer to it as an experiment that went wrong. The residents can confirm that the design has led to a series of problems which are part of their day-to-day lives and require special attention from the Housing Executive.

The design is such that the houses surround small courts. In a space little greater than that between the Benches in front of me is a playground for 50 or 60 children. By any modern standards, that would be insufficent for the layout of Housing Executive estates. The children have no alternative play area other than the road, which has not been properly adopted—or if it has, it was adopted only in the past few days or weeks—six or seven years after the housing estate was built. I urge the Minister to provide the Housing Executive with the finance necessary to provide adequate play facilities for that area because the Housing Executive owns the field adjacent to Mertoun Park.

If it was not bad enough that the residents have all those housing difficulties in relation to design features, they happen to be opposte Kinnegar Army base, which provides them with another problem. The helicopters from the Army base fly low directly overhead. The net result is that the houses shake, their windows rattle and people looking out often wonder whether the helicopters will manage to clear the houses and the trees around the estate. In other districts, grants have been made available for double glazing and it is clearly essential that that should be done in this case.

Mr. Kilfedder: The hon. Gentleman is referring to a matter that is in my constituency of North Down. I have already pursued the issue a number of times with the Ministry of Defence and asked about getting money to provide double glazing for residents in the Holywood area of my constituency. I am glad to have the hon. Gentleman's support. He may rest assured, as may the residents, that I have not given up the battle.

Mr. Robinson: I am grateful for those comments. If the hon. Gentleman refers to the electoral register, he will see that Mertoun Park is split between our two constituencies. He is right that a small part of the estate is in his constituency, and a larger part is in mine. Together we can happily join forces in urging the Minister to take prompt action to deal with a district which, sadly, has been so badly neglected by the Housing Executive and where residents are under so much strain because of the Army camp nearby.

The residents in no way want to make it difficult for the Army operations to continue. They simply want to enjoy the facilities granted to the residents of other Housing Executive estates affected by noise pollution. I trust that the Minister will do something to alleviate that problem.

I wish to refer to an issue that I have raised with Northern Ireland Ministers over the past four years—for that is the length of time that people living in the Bloomfield area have suffered a blight which affects house sales, the quality of life, and the environment. There is a large area known locally as the Sunblest bakery site. After the bakery was burnt down, rubble remained there and the residents have had to live with the consequences, including bricks being thrown through their windows, young people gathering and making bonfires, and all the other nuisances associated with an abandoned site.

The Northern Ireland Office decided to permit two housing associations to purchase the site so that they could build homes on it. Unfortunately, the Minister has not provided the money necessary to enable that to be done. Both the Minister and his Department recognise that houses are needed in that area, but money has still not been forthcoming. Not only are people being deprived of accommodation on an available site, but existing residents are suffering the consequences of the dereliction. I urge the Minister somehow to squeeze out of his budget the finance required to allow the two housing associations to start building.

The hon. Member for Upper Bann referred to the planning and building regulations draft order that the Minister is promoting. My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) referred to a gaping hole in his constituency and said that the Department had granted retrospective planning permission almost as a matter of course. In some instances, that seems to developers to be a better way of obtaining consent. I have raised the same issue with the Minister before, and I suspect that I shall have to do so again as his new proposals do not meet the case.

The Minister's solution for dealing with retrospective applications is to give the Department power to require a person who has built without obtaining consent to make an application subsequently. That is not a suitable punishment for breaching planning controls. In many ways, it will not even serve as a deterrent. Only if a builder refuses to make an application, having already ignored planning controls, will any fine be levied.

I have put to the Minister the argument made in a previous Northern Ireland Assembly that a proper penalty should be imposed on those who commence building without receiving planning permission, which could take

[Mr. Robinson]

the form either of a fine or a more expensive retrospective application. I urge the Minister to re-examine that issue and to make the necessary changes to the 1972 order so that it makes clear that people are required to make a planning application in advance, rather than only after the Department catches up with them. If the Minister does not recognise that that it is a major issue, he should contact town halls throughout the Province.

I have told the Minister before in the House that 25 per cent. of the planning applications made to Castlereagh borough council relate to schemes on which building work had already commenced. At every planning meeting, the council deals with retrospective applications, and that is in a borough where much house building and other types of building is going on.

I urge the Minister to take this matter seriously because by and large people are building without permission and hoping that they will get away with it. They know that if they do not, the Department will not look closely at the merits of the case in planning terms but will consider whether the person can be asked to pull down the structure. The Minister now has the opportunity for a new planning order to address this issue and find a solution which will be a proper disincentive to people who are tempted to build without planning permission.

I stress the point made by the hon. Member for North Down about the rights of objectors. Those rights must be protected, and that can best be done through district councils—so long as they have the power to call for an article 22 inquiry. The new draft planning order provides an opportunity to amend that article by removing the two-month requirement. That would significantly strengthen the hand of district councils and balance the scales between planning applicants and local objectors.

On the matter of the Department of Health and Social Services, I strongly concur with what my hon. Friend the Member for North Down said about the elderly. He has raised the matter in the House on several occasions and on each occasion I have endorsed what he said. I wish that somebody would listen to the two of us and recognise that there is a real need for proper concessionary licences and free transport for the elderly. Those things could be done at very little cost. They would probably cost less than it cost the Government to run the Upper Bann by-election campaign for the Conservative candidate and would do much more good for the people of Northern Ireland.

It is essential to remove the anomaly about concessionary television licences. I do not like the way that the Minister appears to be moving towards eliminating the anomaly by making everyone pay the full television licence fee. I urge him to set a concessionary fee for the elderly right across the board rather than continuing with the present inequitable system.

The last matter that I wish to raise may cause me to step on the toes of the hon. Member for North Down, but I know that he will be happy to support me because he and I share a concern about the issue. It relates to a proposal by the Eastern health and social services board to close two play schools—one in the hon. Gentleman's constituency at Tullycarnet and one in mine at Knocknagoney. The proposition by the board, which I assume is to meet the requirement for cuts in the Health Service proposed by this Tory Government, means that people who are much in need of such facilities and who made great use of them are to be disadvantaged by their loss.

I trust that the Minister will urge his colleague who has responsibility for such matters in the Department of Health and Social Services to use his influence on the board. The board should be told that if it wants to engage in penny pinching it should not do it where it will hurt people. I am talking about areas in which there is much need. The board must not remove facilities which have been an excellent aid to people. In my constituency and in the constituency of North Down the united view held by local government representatives and parliamentary representatives is that the Minister should step in and do something about this.

It is right to pose my final question now that the Secretary of State has joined us. It comes under the heading of the Northern Ireland Assembly. I am sure that the Minister will look at the sums granted in the appropriation fund, and give his considered opinion as to whether it will soon be necessary to present a money order to grant further sums to the Assembly. Does he expect a greater use of that building to be made over the next few months?

10.45 pm

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I found it interesting when, earlier, the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) joined the hon. Member for North Down (Mr. Kilfedder) in speaking about pollution from North Down into Belfast lough. Some people in Northern Ireland think that there is greater pollution in other parts of North Down, nearer to Belfast, and we should like that to be cleared up as well.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble). We served together in the Northern Ireland constitutional convention, on which he also represented south Belfast. As he is a senior lecturer in law at Queen's university, in my constituency, that is another reason for welcoming him, although my alma maters were Magee university college, Londonderry and Trinity college, Dublin. I came from what was the bastion of loyalty, and he comes from what has, in the past 20 years, been a bastion of republicanism. I am delighted that his presence tonight has shown something of his ability.

My hon. Friend succeeds the late Harold McCusker, who came from close to Lurgan. Those who know Northern Ireland know that that is the spade town of Ulster, where we call a spade a spade. Harold was prepared to do so. Sometimes people did not like that, but at least they could not say that they did not understand what he was talking about. The hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) teased my hon. Friend by saying that one should not be controversial in maiden speeches, but that my hon. Friend was getting close to it, and that he would not be heard in silence in future. My hon. Friend could have been even more controversial. He could have reminded the House that a Tory was originally an Irish Jacobite, and in this tercentenary year of the battle of the Boyne, we are glad that we beat the Tories again in Upper Bann.

Vote 1 for the Department of Health and Social Services deals with money for hospitals. A constituency case highlights the problem not only in Northern Ireland but in health care provision in the rest of the kingdom. We

are told that people are being given more choice. At times, I suspect that it is the choice of the turkey just before Christmas, which means that there is little choice left for the poor bird. The Jubilee hospital in south Belfast, which is part of the city hospital, has served the local community, and the wider community, for many years. I should like some clarification on this issue.

I tabled an oral question for the latest Northern Ireland questions, but because of the popularity of television appearances, and the movement towards the by-election, a large number of hon. Members representing other parts of the kingdom asked questions. As a result, I received only a formal written response. I wanted to know what guidance was given to the boards and units of management throughout Northern Ireland on the provision of services. I understand that the senior official in the Eastern health and social services board has told the unit of management, in the presence of others in City hospital, and Jubilee hospital in particular, that the board will not be purchasing obstetric and maternity services from Jubilee hospital. That is one way of stopping provision. I ask the Department to examine the matter. What does it have to say about in-house tendering? What does it have to say about competitive tendering? If my memory is correct, Jubilee hospital has been undertaking about 3,000 deliveries a year at a more economic rate than other hospitals. That runs counter to the judgment that the Eastern board and other boards must accept the lowest bid in competitive tendering.

We have been told this evening that responsibility lies with the board, not with the Minister. The same is true of education and library boards. When I heard the Minister's response, I was reminded of an incident in my boyhood, when my mother chastised my brother and I for splashing water round the kitchen. I said, "It wasn't me." We were twins, and I was holding my brother up to the tap so that he could splash the water. The Minister seemed to be saying what I said when he told us, "It is not my responsibility. The responsibility lies with the board." But who appoints the board and who ensures that the elected representatives who are members of the council are in the minority so that the Department, through its nominees, has the whip hand? I ask that consideration be given to the development of hospital services. It would be much better to tell the people that a hospital is to be closed rather than to have a moratorium, place pressures upon the staff and demoralise all those within a hospital that provides a service to the community.

The work of occupational therapists comes under vote 1 of the Department of Health and Social Services. They are a group whose care and provision affect the entire community. Are there enough occupational therapists? If not, why has their establishment been frozen? How many of them are in the various boards? How many of them are involved in community occupational therapy and are geared for domiciliary services? We are supposedly thinking and moving in the direction of care in the community, and those people will be needed even more. As I understand it, the basic grade in our hospitals has been the subject of a freeze, and in north and west Belfast there has been a waiting list since 1988. How can we say that we are providing care in the community if a waiting list means a wait of six weeks? We must try to help people to develop their skills and to rehabilitate themselves to live in the community. Occupational therapy needs to be examined with greater accuracy and understanding.

When he replies to the debate, the Minister will have been told by a close colleague in the Department on this side of the water that Project 2000 has been promoted. This week it was announced that funds have been provided for it and that various schemes have been cleared. How far have we gone to develop Project 2000 in Northern Ireland? Have I missed an announcement that the scheme has already started, and that it has been recognised in one of the nursing schools? Is there a shortage of funds in that field, especially in the Eastern health and social services board, which has to provide so much specialised one-to-one nursing, partly due to the impact of the terrorist campaign? I understand that the impact of the regrading scheme for nurses left the board with a £6 million shortfall in the budget before it began this year. The board cannot make that up by economies and savings.

Another group that I wish to mention are the disabled, and specifically young deaf people. What provision is being made to train them? I am speaking in particular of the Department of Economic Development vote 3. What provision has been made to train employers and social workers to handle young deaf people who are seeking employment? One of their difficulties is that they are not as literate as other young people, but many of them, if they are treated with understanding, could be outstanding in their jobs. But many employers dismiss them straight away because they cannot communicate with them. I know that young deaf people in England and in Northern Ireland are seeking to promote and to help training. Is the Department doing anything to help through its training programmes?

I mentioned transfer procedures earlier, and my hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) also raised the matter. I believe that appeals must be in by 1 June and will be decided by 15 June. If the evolution of the education system means that we put more people into the grammar school system—that is the choice that people make, and if they have the qualifications to go there they feel deprived if they are not given the opportunity—will we not endanger many secondary schools which could provide the technical and vocational training that so many of our young people need?

[Rev. Martin Smyth]

10.58 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): It is often stimulating to study similar situations and try to find the differences. Often the media are interested in the differences that exist inside major political parties, rather than the distinctions between them. In Northern Ireland the position is somewhat different, and we are often aware of the differences between political organisations—they can be the most extreme differences imaginable—but sometimes it is instructive to consider the similarities between diverse political parties within Northern Ireland.

The hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) talked about a trench and showed us a picture of it. It is interesting to note that all the differing parties in the council concerned were united on the issue. As a new Member in the House, I learned a lesson when a deputation arrived from Strabane to try to persuade the Government to provide money—as is done under the Bellwin scheme—to deal with flooding, because the deputation included people with the widest possible range of political views.

I have been impressed by the extent to which agreement on social and economic questions has been reached. Reference has been made in the debate to pensioners' rights and social welfare provision and to the fact that the Government are not doing what is right for Northern Ireland. The Northern Ireland appropriations provide us with an opportunity to discuss the nearest thing that we have to a Northern Ireland Budget. They are the stuff of politics. You ruled, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the police and security cannot be discussed in the debate. It is right that we should hold Northern Ireland debates from which the police, security and terrorism issues are excluded.

Unfortunately, whenever Northern Ireland appropriations are discussed, most hon. Members think that it is time to go. Nearly everyone disappears. That is partly due to the fact that there will be no Division and that no amendments can be made. I wish that those hon. Members who are interested in security questions and who receive a great deal of press coverage came to these debates to deal with the stuff of Northern Ireland politics.

I refer in particular to Opposition Members. We claim to be democratic Socialists and to be concerned about people's welfare. That is exactly what the Northern Ireland appropriations deal with. They allow hon. Members to discuss economic policies and the budgetary provisions for Northern Ireland. There is sometimes a tendency to get bogged down in the details, partly because there is no other means by which to deal with such issues. A devolved form of government for Northern Ireland would solve that problem. Northern Ireland Members of Parliament want to highlight the many constituency problems that they have to face.

The whole of the island of Ireland increasingly has to involve itself in international economic issues. The solution to Northern Ireland's serious economic problems will be part of a much broader pattern of economic development. It can be likened to the need for all countries to take action to solve the problem of global warming. One nation can do its bit by taking action to counter the greenhouse effect, but correct solutions will not be found unless there is international co-operation. That applies just as much to economic problems as to pollution of the environment. Nevertheless, something could be done and some steps could be taken that the Government have not contemplated. Northern Ireland has its own special problems in addition to having our problems multiplied to the nth degree.

It is interesting to consider the Department of Employment's figures on unemployment in connection with tonight's debate. When the debate finishes at 11.30 pm, we shall have heard three speeches from Conservative Members. According to the Government's unemployment figures, the constituencies that they represent have fewer than 2,000 people unemployed. The constituencies represented by my hon. Friends and I have unemployment figures of between 2,500 and 5,000—unemployment in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) is 5,000 and the figure for my constituency is just over 2,500. My constituency is marginal—half is Conservative territory and the other half is Labour territory, with unemployment concentrated in Labour areas. The problems of homelessness and indebtedness in my constituency are universal in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North.

According to the Government's figures, unemployment in the constituencies of hon. Members representing Northern Ireland is above 4,000 and sometimes considerably more. The highest unemployment figure for a constituency in Northern Ireland is 9,624. We must remember how often the Government adjust the unemployment figures. Those adjustments reduce the unemployment figures for the constituencies of hon. Gentlemen who have spoken tonight, except those of Conservative Members. Seven of the nine constituencies with the highest unemployment figures are in Northern Ireland, where such problems cut across the political divide.

The two constituencies with the highest unemployment figures are Belfast, West, which is represented by Sinn Fein, and Foyle, which is represented by the SDLP. The constituency of Mid-Ulster is next and there is high unemployment in constituencies represented by Ulster Unionist Members. Although we have tried to tackle many of the problems in Northern Ireland with fair employment provisions, those measures cannot work properly without some strategy for tackling unemployment in the Province.

If time permitted, I could say much more about the problems and difficulties in Northern Ireland that represent an extension of many of those that exist in our own constituencies. There are problems of indebtedness: figures published by the Housing Executive show the number of families who have had their electricity cut off. That occurs much more in Northern Ireland than anywhere else in the United Kingdom.

There is widespread homelessness, despite the work of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. Many houses in Northern Ireland are old, and, according to a survey produced by the Housing Executive, 60 per cent. of dwellings were built before 1919. There is much overcrowding, inadequate food storage facilities and lack of proper facilities generally.

To tackle those problems, we need collective, co-ordinated and planned action. I attend these debates regularly, at which my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) suggests such action. He said that there should be more social welfare provision and

economic development. The market philosophy and the principles of free enterprise and entrepreneurship, as propounded by the Government, are most damaging to Northern Ireland.

There are problems with collective, co-ordinated and planned action, but they can be solved by instigating democratic practices. No democracy can operate without vast bureaucracies but by extending democracy bureaucracies can be made to work better. Devolved government for Northern Ireland seems essential.

That is not to deny the difficulties of the political divisions and the deeper divisions in Northern Ireland. A Bill of Rights is particularly appropriate to Northern Ireland's problems, because it would prevent bias against the communities, thereby making them feel more protected and assured. The Secretary of State's responses show that he is not entirely opposed to that development.

Mr. Beggs: I wholeheartedly agree with the hon. Gentleman about the Bill of Rights, but does he agree that, in order to protect minorities, it should apply to every citizen of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Barnes: A case can be made for a Bill of Rights, but it is argued that, because of the civil liberties problems and divisions between both communities, before a Bill of Rights can apply to Northern Ireland it must be worked out for the United Kingdom, but that argument does not hold. A Bill of Rights is appropriate to tackle special problems, so it might be useful to instigate it initially in Northern Ireland. We might benefit and learn from that and be able to develop it more generally. The Government thought that it would be advantageous to introduce the poll tax first in Scotland. Luckily, they have not introduced it in Northern Ireland. They could take progressive action by introducing a Bill of Rights initially in Northern Ireland, from which we could benefit later.

The one democratic advantage of Northern Ireland is that it does not have the poll tax. Its franchise is therefore healthier than the rest of the United Kingdom, where 600,000 people have disappeared from the electoral register. It has the right franchise, but it cannot use it properly because the framework in which to operate it is wrong. If we want the young people of Northern Ireland to respect each other, to develop a social conscience and to be involved in the democratic process, we cannot continue to preach greed, ruthlessness and competition between people. The opposite qualities are exactly those which are required for Northern Ireland. They are the qualities of democratic socialism, which are required for the rest of the United Kingdom. Let us start doing something in that direction, because there is a crying need for social and economic provisions.

11.14 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Peter Bottomley): I thank all hon. Members who have spoken in the debate for the constructive way in which they have approached the problems of Northern Ireland addressed by the spending in the order.

In particular, on my behalf and that of the those who either heard the speech of the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) or heard reports of it, I say that his speech will be remembered as one of the best maiden speeches that has been made in this Parliament. I speak as someone who was elected at a by-election. An hon. Member from the other side said how much he appreciated my speech and how much better it was than that of my party leader. I shall not be as damaging as that because the hon. Gentleman's party leader has not spoken in the debate tonight.

The hon. Member for Upper Bann spoke in a way that showed no sign of nerves. His precise delivery may have betrayed the fact that he made a full-time living as a lecturer and could have continued to do so. But that is not the way the result turned out. We look forward to hearing from him more often. The hon. Gentleman shares with the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) a gift of understatement which is not always characteristic of Members of Parliament from Northern Ireland. He also speaks rather than proclaims, which again is welcome.

The hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) referred to meat. I have tried to avoid putting meat into the headlines. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland did well at Balmoral yesterday in answering open questions in an open way.

Without in any sense seeking to be secret or private, I believe that we are coming to a time when the level of publicity given to BSE should fall. I predict that during the next 12 months no one in the whole of the European Community will die of BSE. Some 55,000 people will die on the roads. How much more useful it would have been if half the publicity about BSE and meat had been diverted to areas in which we can save lives over and over again.

Mr. Jim Marshall: The comparison is nonsense.

Mr. Bottomley: I am not sure what point the hon. Gentleman seeks to make.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) must speak on the record.

Mr. Bottomley: My point is that the most important industry in Northern Ireland is agriculture and a most important part of that is beef.

I do not intend to answer all the points made about arable agriculture and set-aside. Few people in arable farming want to go into set-aside. Set-aside does not apply to most arable farmers, unless they are in environmentally sensitive areas, where different considerations apply.

My prime job is to work with my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Minister for Agriculture and Food from the south—I pay tribute to Michael O'Kennedy—with whom I was at Balmoral today. We spoke openly together about some of the agriculture matters that we have in common. We also work closely with the European Commission. Although it is not always shown in the appropriation orders, the outcome of discussions among the Twelve has been better for Northern Ireland than people predicted. I am told that sometimes it is like trying to line up 12 strawberries in a row on a fruit machine, although I would not want to confess to gambling while I am serving at the Northern Ireland Office. There is a partnership between Members of the European Parliament for Northern Ireland, the Department of Agriculture in Northern Ieland—officials as well as Ministers—and our colleagues in London and Brussels. There are further improvements to come, but agriculture remains the most important industry to be protected and on which to build.

Rev. William McCrea: Can the Minister explain why in the south of Ireland "BSE-free meat" is stamped on meat but in Northern Ireland we cannot have the same?

Mr. Bottomley: In terms of what I would call the "health contour", Northern Ireland stands between the south and the rest of the United Kingdom. Great Britain has a higher incidence of BSE——

Rev. William McCrea: What about Northern Ireland?

Mr. Bottomley: That is why I used the expression "Great Britain". Even so, eating meat in Great Britain is safe. Whether the beef comes from Great Britain, Northern Ireland or the south, it is safe to eat. The incidence of BSE is obviously much lower in Northern Ireland than in the rest of Great Britain, but we cannot declare ourselves to be BSE-free. It is vital that we have the same procedures as Great Britain for disposing of offals and any potentially dangerous bits. The south has a lower incidence. The figures are well known and I shall not use up my time by repeating them.

It is fair that we should try to enjoy the benefits of our position without declaring that we are not part of the United Kingdom. I would advance from that point and say that I want to continue disposing of the potentially dangerous offals and have it accepted that the beef anywhere in these islands—Great Britain, Northern Ireland or the south—is safe to eat.

The problem is the reaction of some people, such as education authorities and others in Great Britain, and potential foreign customers, who have begun to believe some of the media comments. I am not being party political because I do not think that the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), who speaks on agriculture for the Labour party, intended the media to carry his remarks as they did. But as the debate on Monday showed, whenever such issues arise, we get more and more appointed, and some self-appointed, experts who make declarations that are not necessarily right. I argue that it is not right to raise scares about beef.

I have never hidden the fact that I am a partial vegetarian. I have reached an agreement with my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food that if I occasionally eat meat, he will occasionally eat vegetables. I am trying to ensure that I do what the chief medical officer for Northern Ireland did yesterday, which is to eat beef. I am not making a song and dance about doing it, or about doing it in front of the television cameras. I simply mean that we should eat beef to illustrate that it is safe. I do not want to use the rest of the time allowed for this debate talking about this issue because the more one repeats such things, the more one raises the problem.

The assurances were understood at Balmoral where very few people were asking questions about this. They understood the issues. The chief medical officer understands them, as do the veterinary officers. I hope that the customers will understand them, too.

In general, Northern Ireland food is, if I can use the expression, green, clean and healthy. We in Northern Ireland produce more natural food. We do not go in for the intensive use of either pesticides or concentrates, which is one reason why we have achieved recognition for doing far better than Great Britain for lamb, poultry, beef and virtually everything. In one area relating to pigs we are not doing quite as well as Great Britain, but we will solve that problem. Other than that, we can buy our food with confidence.

I hope that those who buy food from continental Europe will recognise that they should be coming to Ireland instead—to all of Ireland, north and south, where we shall be doing what we can to keep the "contour of health" at the highest possible level and to bring others up to our level. If it is not damaging for me to agree with Michael O'Kennedy, I stress that some of the approaches adopted on mainland Europe will have to rise to our levels. We shall not come down to some of their practices. It will sometimes be difficult for other countries to face that. It is right that we should work both with MAFF and with Dublin. There are no real boundaries for food production in Ireland as a whole.

Many important points have been made in this debate. I shall concentrate first on the speech of the hon. Member for Upper Bann. I shall then refer to those hon. Members who spoke last, before working back to those who spoke first. This seems appropriate given the Northern Ireland approach to politics and religion.

The Craigavon issue is important. Craigavon has not gone as well as it should. Discussions taking place between the planning service, the Department of the Environment and the Department of Economic Development should lead to a better future for Craigavon, which at the moment is in the balance. We need to find ways of using the talents of its people and of recreating its development so that it can become what it was intended to be—a thriving part of Northern Ireland. One advantage of the Upper Bann by-election—whose greatest disadvantage was the untimely death of Harold McCusker—is the focus on the area that has allowed many of us to know more about it than we might otherwise have done.

I must say how pleased I was to note that, every time I saw the hon. Gentleman driving past, he seemed to be sticking to the highway code.

I was grateful for the hon. Gentleman's support for the cultural traditions programme. I believe that it will help to bring people in Northern Ireland together and enable them to recognise that one cultural tradition need not triumph over another. As has been pointed out this evening, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State pays as much attention to the rights of majorities as to those of minorities—but I do not wish to become involved in politics; that, I feel, would be entirely wrong on the Floor of the House of Commons.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the cadre of officials for the Northern Ireland Assembly. That would best be dealt with through correspondence. Several issues that have been raised this evening need more discussion, if that is possible, or a more detailed response.

I hope that I shall not be accused of favouritism if I return to the remarks of the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster. I was not trying to score a party political point earlier, and I am sorry that he thought I was. Clearly we need to get to know one another better. I meant only that, if the natural reaction of overseas industrialists is to consider investing in places of which they have heard, or places where their colleagues have made investments—and we welcome the increasing involvement of the Japanese, for instance—they are more likely to choose areas such as Carrickfergus rather than South Down or Mid-Ulster. The hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) made the same point: how can the Industrial Development Board persuade more

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people to come to those areas? I meant to make the point in the gentlest possible way, but I was obviously too heavy-handed for the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster.

Mr. McGrady: Can the Minister explain a paradox? Why does a voluntary society such as the one in charge of the reconstruction of the Down museum railway attract Japanese visitors to invest in its little project, while all the weight, bite and strength of the IDB cannot persuade them to visit the same area?

Mr. Bottomley: Perhaps I should ask the IDB to engage in consultation directly with the hon. Gentleman—and with every hon. Member who is interested in such matters—to establish what can be done to make their areas more attractive to potential visitors. There is no point in arguing so much between ourselves that the investment goes elsewhere—to the Netherlands, for instance. That is what happened when the third London airport was being discussed—or was it the fourth?

We must try to work in the interests of Northern Ireland, and overcome some of the hiccups relating to inward investment. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will explain that to some of his contacts, as I feel that I may be doing more harm than good whenever I say it in public.

I may not support the views of the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) on the poll tax, but I pay tribute to his serious interest in Northern Ireland. Those who wax eloquent when some security-related issues are raised could gain some advantage from listening to his speeches about the Northern Ireland economy. It may not be easy for him to hold views on Northern Ireland that are unfashionable within his party, but he is always well worth hearing.

Admittedly, when the hon. Gentleman starts talking about collective co-ordinated planning, it sounds rather like what I used to hear when I was elected in 1975. We were always being told about matters such as industrial strategy agreements, which could not even be arranged with nationalised industries. There is much to be said for the Northern Ireland approach, which is to try to find the enterprise and work with it, whether it is generated internally or externally.

Let us consider food, which is the other side of agriculture. It is worth recognising that the largest food business in Northern Ireland is still only about a third of the size of several in the south. Although we do not want a monopoly in any industry, we should work together if we are to succeed on a European scale.

The provision of viable education is important and that requires the provision of viable schools.

The arguments about the rural communities were well made. In my joint role as full-time Minister responsible for agriculture and part-time Minister responsible for the environment, I intend to do everything I can on the rural improvement programmes so that agriculture can make its full contribution and Government resources can be co-ordinated through the Hodges committee. So, even without adding much to the resources, we can use them more effectively so that the well-being of people throughout Northern Ireland is improved. That is what brings us together in Parliament and what lies behind people's political approaches. That aim also lies behind many of the improvements in the economy of Northern Ireland in the past few years.

It is for Ministers not to take the credit when things go well, but to ensure that more things do go well. Our responsibility is to make possible the things that are right—jobs and justice lie at the basis of that.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Appropriation (No. 2) (Northern Ireland) Order 1990 which was laid before this House on 16th May, be approved.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That, notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph (3) of Standing Order No. 101 (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.), the Criminal Damage (Compensation) (Northern Ireland) Order 1977 (Amendment) Order 1990 (S.R.(N.I.), 1990, No. 25) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

Lead in Water (Scotland)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

11.30 pm

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): The lead level in Scottish water supplies is not a new problem. I remember debating the need for action on it when I was a student at the university of Glasgow.

One remarkable aspect about the problem is that, despite the improvements made, the numbers of Scottish people affected by drinking water containing lead has not changed in the past 20 years. The reasons for that are straightforward. While some remedial efforts have been made, standards regarding the acceptable level of lead in water have risen. Therefore, the number of people affected by water with above the tolerable standard has remained stubbornly high.

My purpose tonight is to point out that remedial efforts are no longer enough and that only eradication of the problem will suffice. That must be done through a properly financed and organised lead pipe and tank replacement scheme together with the Government's implementation of the European Community standards for lead levels in drinking water. The people have a right to expect that Governments will supply wholesome and healthy water for everyday drinking.

In the past decade, the public have been exposed to intolerably high levels of lead in drinking water. In that time, the Government have done everything possible to avoid bringing water standards into line with the European water directive. I intend to expose the Government's shameful record on this and to seek to persuade the Government to reverse their previous policy of inaction and comply with the European directive in the shortest possible time by means of a programme of lead pipe replacement.

It is the responsibility of the Government to ensure that resources are available to local authorities to ensure that all lead plumbing is identified in public and private housing. Evidence that lead, even in low quantities, is damaging to health has been mounting since the early 1970s. Scientists in Europe and in the United States have produced study after study to show that the only safe level of lead in water is zero. Even at low levels, lead is a poison which has demonstrable effects on children's health.

More than 8 million households have lead in their plumbing systems—about 45 per cent. of British households. Those households are at risk only if they are in areas which suffer from the water characteristic known as plumbo-solvency, which refers to the ability of soft and acidic water to dissolve lead. About 2·5 million such households are located in plumbo-solvent areas. The combination of lead-solvent water and lead plumbing produces the unfortunate consequences of tap water with a high lead content.

For those with a historical frame of mind, there is an interesting parallel. I am told that the combination of soft water and lead is exactly similar in action to the wine and pewter combination which poisoned the Roman aristocracy and led to the fall of the Roman empire. While the people of Edinburgh are happy to share architectural style with the ancient Romans, there would be massive opposition to sharing their lead poisoning. Indeed, in a constituency next to that of the Minister, the results of a survey carried out this week show that people are drinking water with five times the European limit of lead while others produced levels of twice and three times the limit. One Leith tenement had 22 times the permissible limit under EEC regulations. Such water is being drunk daily by Edinburgh families. That is the problem.

Within the United Kingdom, Scotland has by far the largest population living in old, unmodernised houses in soft water areas, and therefore the largest population at risk from lead contaminated drinking water. Within Scotland, Glasgow, Edinburgh and the populous central belt are most at risk. Limited funds have meant that all renovation work, including pipe replacement, has been slow and piecemeal.

One company which specialises in lead pipe replacement work states that it has been

"in touch with Glasgow district council grants department over the past few months. The situation at present is that they are not processing any new applications and have not been since mid December 1989. They cannot give any idea in the near future when anything will be processed. West Lothian district is in a similar situation with no funds having been available since January 1990. No date in the foreseeable future is expected from West Lothian district council for grants to be processed. Other areas in which we do work are now saying that due to demand, the allocation this year will not be sufficient, and they are not hopeful of getting further funding."

Work in the areas most at risk is coming to a grinding halt. I put the blame firmly on central Government who alone have the resources and the ability to fund and to run a proper lead pipe replacement campaign. The current grant system does not encourage builders or house owners to replace lead pipes. Indeed, public housing has suffered from a long period of spending restrictions imposed on local authorities by the Government. That has obviously meant that lead pipe replacement has been reduced to a snail's pace or has ceased.

Housing departments are often in the unfortunate position of having to choose between initiating programmes to eradicate dampness or to replace lead pipes, even though each poses a significant public health risk. In Glasgow 80,000 public sector houses and 81,000 privately owned homes still contain lead plumbing. In Edinburgh the respective figures are 20,000 and 45,000. The rate of local authority grants to private home owners has been small compared with the size of the task. Only 58,000 grants were made throughout Scotland over the six-year period between 1982 and 1988. At that rate of grant allocation, it will be well into the next century before Scotland's private houses are completely rid of lead plumbing.

In the early part of the decade, lead contaminated the tap water of about 35 per cent. of households throughout Scotland, yet there has been no co-ordinated, properly funded programme of remedial action to rid Scotland of lead plumbing. It is typical of the Government to prefer making economic savings rather than paying for a once-for-all solution. Water treatment can provide relief from the higher range of lead levels, but now that higher quality water standards are required to safeguard public health, water treatment no longer provides an attractive, cheaper option.

Additional reductions in lead cannot be achieved through treatment processes. Therefore, to improve the quality of drinking water to a level considered safe, all remedial action programmes must switch to lead pipe replacement.

By thinking that they can save money by choosing water treatment instead of lead pipe replacement, the Government are inflicting a double injustice on the public. First, they will have to pay for lead pipe replacement in addition to the money spent on the now redundant treatment facilities. Secondly, the public have been unnecessarily exposed to lead during the time it has taken the Government to be bullied into such effective action.

As the costs involved in partial, as opposed to complete, lead pipe replacement are relatively small, the correct option has to be the final and complete eradication of such lead piping. Instead of action to protect Scotland's public health and produce wholesome, lead-free drinking water, the Government have dragged their feet over implementing the 1980 European water directive, which resulted in Scotland's drinking water failing to achieve a standard of quality by the stipulated deadline of July 1985.

A year later, Friends of the Earth in Scotland sent a letter of complaint to the European Commission, drawing to its attention the long list of actions and standards that the Scottish Office had failed to achieve over the six years since the United Kingdom signed the directive. The Commission has now brought a prosecution against the United Kingdom Government. I compliment the Friends of the Earth in Scotland on authorising a survey that showed a shocking level of lead-polluted water in Scotland and on its initiative in running a pure water campaign for Scotland.

The Friends of the Earth survey does not attempt to provide the detailed analysis for which official agencies and authorities are responsible and which they should be producing. However, in the absence of any other relevant data, the survey provides an estimate of the numbers of people affected by different levels of lead. The Minister, when he replies, will no doubt seek to play down the survey's significance by claiming that the size of the sample is too small and that it is not statistically valid across the whole population. If that is the case, let the Government compare like with like and produce the true figures.

The Government's response to environmental pollution has been piecemeal and confused. They have largely ignored the recommendations of the 1983 Royal Commission on environmental pollution that deals with home improvements and repair grants, as well as publicity. Lead in petrol is a much more controversial debate, yet the Government have acted on petrol but not on the scientifically more proven water problem. Different Government Departments have adopted different recommended standards. While the Minister gallops at a snail's pace towards the 50 micrograms per litre standard, his colleagues in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food recommend a lower safety level of only 30 micrograms per litre. Which is right? I would claim that both standards are inadequate compared with the United States' Environmental Protection Agency's final target of zero lead and its current working target of 10 micrograms per litre.

The Government claim that they are environmentally conscious and Ministers regularly declare, "How green is my policy." Yet here before them is the lead standard test. Will this be another case of mere Government greenwash or will they take real action? The Government have dragged their heels for 10 years over the implementation of current European lead levels, which are now being superseded. The only safe level of lead in water is no lead. Greenwash or action—which is it to be?

11.43 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): I congratulate the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) on securing an opportunity to debate the extremely important subject of lead in drinking water in Scotland. As I shall demonstrate, it is an issue that the Scottish Office has tackled effectively, and it will continue to do so. That applies not only to lead in water but to the quality of water supplies generally. We set great store by the quality of Scottish drinking water, and considerable progress has been made over the past decade in improving it where necessary. Further improvement works are necessary to achieve the strict quality standards in the new water quality regulations that we brought into force on 1 May.

It may be helpful it I describe the nature of the problem of lead in water and the particular difficulties that we have to overcome in Scotland. Lead was widely used for water pipes and cisterns in domestic dwellings up to the early 1960s. It is seldom naturally present in water supply sources, and the water put into supply by Scottish water authorities, regional and islands councils contains little lead, if any at all.

As the hon. Member for Angus, East pointed out, some waters—particularly soft, acidic waters—are plumbo-solvent: that is to say, they dissolve lead through contact with lead pipes and plumbing systems. There can also be a short-term problem with the lead-based solder used in jointing copper plumbing systems. Plumbo-solvency is a problem in many parts of the United Kingdom, but it has been particularly marked in Scotland because of the nature of our water supply sources.

A second factor is the traditional pattern of housing in Scotland, which is something on which the hon. Gentleman also touched. It is a pattern of high-density, tenement property with a heritage of lead plumbing, particularly in urban areas. Later, I shall describe how that problem has been tackled.

Particular concern about the health implications of lead in drinking water began to develop in the 1970s. At that time, it was considered that a lead level of up to 300 microgrammes per litre was acceptable. As a result of growing concern, a nationwide survey of lead levels in drinking water supplies was undertaken in 1975-76, and the results were published in 1977 as "Pollution Paper No. 12".

In 1978, the use of lead for new pipes was prohibited by byelaws, but its use in that way had already generally ceased many years earlier. In the same year, a number of expert advisory groups were established to examine various aspects of lead in water, including the identification of plumbo-solvent supplies, monitoring procedures, and water treatment processes. Those groups produced four reports on lead in water in 1980-81, and another in 1984.

Additionally, the 1975-76 national survey led to a number of medical studies throughout the United Kingdom in the years that followed. In Scotland, the most significant were undertaken using population groups in Glasgow, Ayr, Dundee and Edinburgh. I will not describe or discuss the details of those studies but I shall highlight some important points.

The Glasgow and Ayr studies confirmed the significant contribution that lead levels in water made to blood lead levels. They also clearly demonstrated that the treatment

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

of water by pH adjustment significantly reduced the lead levels both in drinking water and the blood of the study subjects. The Edinburgh studies undertaken over the past six to seven years have contributed greatly to our knowledge of the health implications of lead, particularly for children.

I emphasise that the Scottish Office has always taken full account of the medical evidence as it has developed over the past 10 years or so, and the medical advice based on that evidence is reflected in the increasingly stringent measures that have been taken to tackle lead in water.

Mr. Welsh: Does not the Minister accept that remedial action will not solve the problem, but only the complete removal and replacement of lead pipes and tanks? It has taken the United Kingdom 10 years to catch up with European standards, which themselves will be made stricter still over the next few years. When will the Minister take action?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the complete removal eventually of lead piping is highly desirable.

It has often been claimed, and as the hon. Gentleman suggests, that little was done to tackle the problem in Scotland before the European Community's drinking water directive came into force in 1985. Nothing could be further from the truth. I have already mentioned the range of medical and other studies that started in the late 1970s, but practical measures were also under way by that time.

The first priority was to reduce quickly and effectively overall exposure to lead in the population. The treatment of water supplies to tackle plumbo-solvency by pH adjustment—and subsequently by orthophosphate dosing if necessary—was clearly the most suitable proven method of reducing lead levels to the benefit of the maximum number of people.Throughput the period up to 1985 the water authorities, encouraged by the Scottish Office, took effective action to improve their supplies by water treatment, particularly those serving major population groups.

For example, Strathclyde region installed lime dosing for the city of Glasgow before 1980—including the Loch Katrine scheme, which alone serves more than 730,000 people. All the major supplies in the region had pH control installed before 1985, by which time more than 70 per cent. by volume of the water supply in the region had such treatment in place. Similarly, all the main works in Lothian had lime dosing installed before 1985 and the main supply to Aberdeen was treated from 1978. The supplies to Dundee and most other areas of Tayside region had pH control before 1982.

It is clear that the problem was recognised and effective action undertaken in the main population areas in Scotland in the late 1970s and early 1980s. However, in 1983 the Government initiated surveys in all the water authority areas to identify all supplies at which remedial works were necessary. The survey results showed that, in 1985, 103 supply areas—many of them small and rural —should be treated. I should emphasise that, even within these areas, only a fairly small proportion of the population might have tap water with a lead content above the prescribed level. Of these 103 supplies, 86 were scheduled for completion by the target date of the end of 1989. Of the other 17, representing about 16 per cent. of the 103 supplies that needed treatment, 16 are in Strathclyde and one serves part of Edinburgh. Twelve schemes, including that in Edinburgh, are due to be completed this year, four are due for completion next year and the last, which is a major scheme involving work other than lead, is due for completion in 1992.

As the hon. Gentleman may know, it is these 17 supplies which form the basis of the application to the European Court of Justice alleging non-compliance with the lead standard in the drinking water directive. Perhaps I should say something about the case which the European Commission has raised in the court, alleging non-compliance by the United Kingdom on a number of counts related to the drinking water directive, including lead in water in Scotland. It is our strong view that the Commission's application is misconceived. It certainly does nothing to reduce the amount of lead in drinking water. Considerable progress has been made in tackling the problem, and we have made strenuous efforts over the years both to satisfy the Commission's information requirements and to reach agreement on the timetables for improvement works. I assure the hon. Gentleman that the United Kingdom will be mounting a robust defence to the Commission's allegations on lead and, indeed, on the other issues before the court.

The work undertaken by the water authorities to improve their supplies by treatment over the past 10 years or more represents major progress in reducing levels of lead in drinking water, but that is not all that has been done. The Scottish Office recognised that the long-term solution to the problem of lead in water was the removal of lead piping, as the hon. Gentleman has suggested. The water authorities have for many years been replacing their lead communication pipes between the mains and individual properties when it is possible to do so in the course of other works and when house owners are replacing their own lead pipes. The authorities are now obliged by statute to replace their pipes at the request of a consumer who is replacing his lead pipe when there is a risk of the lead standard being breached at the consumer's tap. In 1982 the Government also extended the housing repairs grant scheme to include grant assistance specifically aimed at tackling lead in water.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: Will the Minister give way?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No. I propose to answer the point clearly made by the hon. Gentleman.

Grants became available for the replacement of domestic lead plumbing under more favourable conditions compared with other repair grants. At the outset, the rate of grant was pitched at 90 per cent. for a temporary period in common with the other categories of repair grant, but when the general rate reverted to 50 per cent. in 1984 the Government held the rate for lead pipe replacement at 75 per cent. in recognition of this particular problem. Between 1982 and 1989, nearly 67,000 such grants were made to owners in the private housing sector in Scotland. In the same period, some 475,000 dwellings were improved by public sector agencies, such as local authorities, Scottish Homes, the Scottish Special Housing Association and New Towns, and by housing associations, and many of these dwellings will have had lead plumbing replaced as part of the overall improvement works.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I should like to develop what I am saying, as I have a lot to say. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will be able to speak later when I have got through my key points.

The steps taken by the water and housing authorities are sound, positive measures to tackle the lead in water problem, but we are not content to leave it at that. The new water quality regulations which came into force on 1 May introduce a tighter quality standard on lead than is required by the EC drinking water directive. The water authorities will have to reassess their water supplies in the light of the new standard by the end of 1991 and, where necessary, improve their treatment works to meet that standard by 1995.

The new regulations also implement the Government's long standing policy of reducing exposure to lead in the environment and the recent medical advice that it is prudent to continue to reduce such exposure. Regulation 24 places a new requirement on water authorities, whenever there is a risk that the lead standard may be exceeded because of lead dissolved from consumers' pipes, to treat the water in most circumstances in order to eliminate the risk or reduce it to a minimum. This provision is expected to bring about treatment of water to reduce plumbo-solvency in many areas which are not covered by improvement programmes designed to meet the less rigorous standard set in the EC directive.

The Scottish Office has played its part in this, and has demonstrated its commitment to improving the water environment generally, by increasing capital expenditure for water and sewerage programmes by 50 per cent. in recent years, from £95 million in 1985-86 to £142 million in this financial year. Expenditure is set to rise even further to £170 million next year and to £190 million in 1992-93. In setting these substantial increases, we took into account the possibility that the water authorities would need to carry out further treatment to reduce plumbo-solvency to meet the new lead standard.

I was interested to read in *The Scotsman* of 21 April a report which quoted Mr. Roger Mullin, the SNP's environment spokesman, as saying that, according to local authority estimates, £800 million was needed to improve water and sewerage over the next five years. This was claimed to be £300 million more than the Government were prepared to spend. I can tell the hon. Gentleman that we are allocating more than £500 million over only three years and are therefore well on the way to exceeding the figure quoted by the SNP. If that rate of £500 million over three years was carried forward, it would be over £800 million, but we plan for only three years at a time.

The hon. Gentleman may also be interested to know that I met representatives of COSLA's water committee last Friday to discuss expenditure on water and sewerage. I listened very carefully to what they had to say, and assured them that their views will be fully taken into account when we set capital allocations for future years.

As the hon. Gentleman is aware, we have also asked the local authorities, Scottish Homes and the new town development corporations to estimate the number of public and private sector houses which contain lead plumbing, and the cost of replacing it. This information should provide a more accurate assessment of the scale of the problem and inform our consideration of what further steps might be taken to reduce exposure to lead in water. When all the returns are received, we will be collating and publishing the results.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: When?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We shall get on with this as soon as possible, because it is extremely important.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the survey and report on lead in water by Friends of the Earth (Scotland). A copy of the report was sent to me, and I have today sent a full reply to the Friends. I should be happy to provide a copy to the hon. Member. However, the report reveals considerable ignorance and misunderstanding of the issues involved. In addition, the Friends' survey is so seriously flawed that no reliable conclusions can be drawn from it.

I am pleased to say, however—this is to its credit—that there is much about which we can agree in the Friends' 10-point programme for action. Indeed, the Government have implemented seven of the action points, and the other three were already under active consideration.

Mr. Welsh: Instead of attacking the Friends of the Earth, will not the Minister accept that the authorities were involved? At least the Friends of the Earth produced figures. In 10 years, the Government did not get round to producing the figures on which positive decisions could be taken. Five years have passed since the European deadline was reached, and only now are the Government producing the figures. They should have done so long ago.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have made it clear that we are implementing seven of the action points and that the other three are under active consideration. I can respond at length on the figures.

To sum up, the Scottish Office has always recognised the health implication of lead in water. We have taken practical and positive steps to tackle the problem in the light of the developing medical evidence and advice. We are certainly not complacent in any way. We are actively considering what further measures we might take. We shall certainly go ahead as quickly as possible. I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman for initiating the debate.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at 12 o'clock midnight.

House of Commons

Thursday 24 May 1990

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

BILL PRESENTED

PLANNING

Mr. Keith Vaz presented a Bill to extend the rights of local authorities in respect of planning application appeals; to extend the powers of local authorities in respect of breaches of planning conditions; to make provision for additional planning controls upon the installation of satellite dish receivers; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 22 June and to be printed. [Bill 152.]

Housing Corporation

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Goodlad.]*

9.34 am

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): I am grateful that this subject has been selected for debate and for the timing of the debate. I must declare an interest because I am a partner in a firm that advises and works for housing associations. The purpose of the debate is to seek a solution or at least an easement of the cash crisis in which the Housing Corporation and housing associations now find themselves. That crisis is a consequence of the change in the way in which the Housing Corporation gives approval to spend money for housing associations whose target for starting and completing homes is 20,000 per year.

In 1989 the total production of public sector homes, which are largely to rent, was 27,000. That is disgracefully low. We are talking about virtually all public sector low-cost housing for rent since the Government massacred the local authority house building programme. The cause lies ultimately with the Government, who introduced the Housing Act 1988. The solution is also in the hands of the Government and they can provide it not by the announcement of any new unit or committee but by the announcement of a new commitment to see through the programme of 20,000 starts and 20,000 completions in the housing association sector.

It is not enough for Ministers simply to shuffle off responsibility for what has happened to the Housing Corporation or the private sector. Ministers are responsible for housing. They are not Ministers of excuses or alibis—they are here to provide houses, but they have provided only a small number. I do not want excuses—I want action.

Housing associations now provide almost all the low-cost homes for rent in Great Britain. Those homes are almost all for those who are in need and on low incomes. The associations provide much of the new housing for the homeless and also for people with acute needs such as those who have had long periods of hospitalisation, people suffering from mental or physical illness, those who need sheltered accommodation and people who need accommodation that is coupled with counselling.

There is almost no new help for such housing except that which comes from the housing associations. That is because the Government have savaged local authority programmes. Housing associations are non-profit-making bodies. Some are co-operatives and some are specialised, and all are governed by volunteers. Most of the vacancies which occur in their properties go on nomination to local authorities and the associations play a useful part in tackling the problem of homelessness.

I shall now deal with the cause of the present crisis. I shall have to simplify my explanation, but my description will certainly not be inaccurate. Obviously, I cannot spend a long time going through all the causes. Before 1989 housing associations received approval for loans and subsidies. The subsidy is called HAG, which means housing association grant. They received approvals for individual schemes and the money was then paid by the Housing Corporation to acquire land, to move on to site and sign building contracts, to complete legal obligations to builders and for the completion of the site, and to pay development costs.

The system that operated before 1989 made it relatively simple, although it was not entirely without problems, to keep the flow of money from the Housing Corporation to the housing associations with public expenditure limits. In the financial year 1989-90 the system was changed. Following the passage of the 1988 Act, housing associations were invited to be more commercial, to use private finances, to take more risks and, under the assured tenancy arrangements, to charge higher rents. The larger housing associations were given the freedom to plan; it was called tariff expenditure. They relied heavily on the tariff arrangements, but unfortunately they have been torn up in the recent crisis.

Under the new system, associations could draw their allocations much more rapidly. They could then get on with the job of providing housing by accelerating the development process, which they did with great success. Indeed, it is precisely because they responded effectively to the new system that they are now being penalised and find themselves in crisis, which affects not only them but, ultimately and more importantly, their consumers. Housing associations did not overspend in 1989-90; they simply spent their money more quickly and did exactly what the Government had asked them to do—that is, to work with the private sector to achieve a rapid provision of housing. Of course, the numbers are still far too low, but within what they were allowed to do they responded with a rapid system for putting housing into use.

In 1989-90, the system took the strain of several forces. The first was the much bigger initial payments to housing associations to start schemes. That was the pattern of the new regime. The second was the speed with which housing associations started on site or bought in completed schemes. Because of the slump in house building programmes, there were more off-the-shelf schemes available. Therefore, the available money was used more quickly. The third was the encouragement to get on with new schemes because of the change in capital controls on local authorities which came into force on 1 April. Many authorities were anxious to dispose of money that they could spend only in the last financial year, or to dispose of land under the old system. The fourth—which I regard as

[Mr. John Fraser]

the forgotten factor—was the remaining substantial cost of completing schemes in the pipeline from the earlier years of the old approval system.

In financial terms, the fast train of 1989 ran into the back of the slow train of 1988 and earlier years. That resulted in financial disaster and many casualties among housing associations. That is my description of events. The Housing Corporation used less florid language, but it amounted to the same thing. It said that the costs flowing from its 1989-90 programmes already approved require

"significantly more cash in 1990-91 than we had previously forecast, leaving much less cash for schemes to be approved during the year."

The £815 million budget for the Housing Corporation for 1989-90 was grossly exceeded and all sorts of devices were introduced either to cure or to disguise the problem. Of course, it is not a real problem—it is first a public expenditure accountancy problem and could be easily solved. Money was transferred from the 1990-91 programme to last year's programme, leaving much less available for this year; a 13-month year was invented; new approvals were delayed; and the tariff arrangements—which, in effect, were the long-term planning agreements for associations—were torn up and disowned.

The current year still holds commitments from the old approval system as well as the balance of commitments that were accelerated in 1989-90. I understand that the consequences are so severe that only about £70 million will be available for new starts this year as against the £450 million needed to sustain 20,000 starts a year under the new system, when much greater amounts of money are paid to housing associations once they have undertaken schemes. Because of the telescoping of previous programmes, only £70 million will be available, of which half is committed to starts on the new homeless housing programme. On the worst scenario, those figures mean that in the current financial year the number of starts will fall from 20,000 to 3,000, a cut of 85 per cent. Even on a medium scenario, with a cut of 50 per cent. to 75 per cent., it would be an appalling tragedy for the provision of housing for rent, which is the greatest unmet need in today's housing market. I cannot believe that Ministers will allow that to happen.

I wish to cite some examples of the consequences of what some call the current crisis, but which is officially called a dislocaton. The Government forced Lambeth borough council to sell a site because they said, with a little justice, that Lambeth was too slow in developing it. I asked the Minister's predecessor to ensure that the site would be sold to a housing association for rapid development to provide much needed homes for rent. I am pleased to say that he agreed to that proposition. As a result, the land was sold to a housing association so that it could get on with the job quickly. The consequence of the present crisis is that the housing association cannot develop the site because money will not be available to start during the current financial year.

A second example is of land in Kent which was acquired in phases for sensible development by a housing co-operative. It completed phase 1 and has acquired the land for phase 2. It is ready to go out to tender for the building contract. That co-operative has now been told by the Housing Corporation that the site cannot be started. Interest charges are accruing on the money paid for the site. Building costs may well rise during the next year. If the accumulated costs exceed the maximum allowable total—it is called indicative costs—the scheme may have to be abandoned. It is another example of a delay in starts this year leading eventually to a reduction in the number of completions in later years.

The third example is the number of development themes run by housing associations which may have to be disbanded. Those people are specialists who have been working together for a number of years. They have had a reasonable flow of work and they depend on development allowances to keep their teams together. Their expertise may now be lost. Associations that rely on a steady flow of development allowances could find themselves in financial difficulty with the consequent need to shed staff. At the end of the day, fewer starts this year—possibly as low as 3,000 to 4,500—must mean fewer completions in later years.

I demand that the Government act to ameliorate, or even to cure, the crisis. There are massive capital receipts in the public sector which could well be used. It is well within the Government's capability to solve the problem. As the Minister knows, there are huge accumulated capital receipts among local authorities. If a scheme could be put together with the Treasury to release that money, housing association schemes could continue without dislocation.

If the Minister acted like a Minister with responsibility for housing and used a bit of imagination, housing associations would be able to maintain a programme of 20,000 starts as well as 20,000 completions a year. That would assist the building industry, which faces a difficult time, to maintain a reasonable flow of work and would help the homeless and those in need. In addition, it would have no long-term cost implications.

If one examines the dislocation, the crisis, the delay in starts, one sees that it will have the effect in the long term of increasing rather than decreasing expenditure. The cost of keeping people in homeless accommodation is notoriously high and great savings could be made there.

What we have this morning is the chance for the Government to turn a crisis into an opportunity, to meet housing need and human need and to keep the contract that they made with housing associations. I hope that the Minister will give me a positive and constructive response this morning.

9.50 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) for initiating the debate and giving me the opportunity to explain the background to some adjustments that have recently become necessary to the Housing Corporation's capital programme, to correct some misapprehensions about the consequences of these adjustments, and to reaffirm our confidence both in the corporation and in the ability of the housing association movement to take the lead in the provision of low-cost homes for households in need.

I think that it is implicit in what the hon. Gentleman was saying that he recognises that the answer to today's housing problems does not lie in yesterday's massive municipal house-building programmes. Of course, there were and are plenty of good and well-run council estates, but there are also many notorious failures. Local authorities have had a near-monopoly of low-cost rented provision in their areas, and that monopoly has bred

inefficiency and indifference to the customer's wants and needs. Authorities that have provided decent housing and managed it well have done so despite that monopoly, not because of it.

Housing associations have on the whole avoided the mistakes of local housing authorities. As relatively small-scale providers, they have not allowed bureaucracy or professional vested interests to get between them and their customers. On average, their tenants are better satisfied than those of local authorities. That is the main reason why over the past few years we have reversed the traditional roles and made associations, not local authorities, the lead providers of new low-cost housing. In doing so, however, we have found it necessary to recast the basis for funding their development.

Associations are private bodies, owing their foundation to volunteer effort and enterprise, yet since 1974 they had looked entirely to the public sector for their development funding. Moreover, because rent controls left associations with no means of increasing their income, that funding had to take a form that left all the risks with Government and provided no incentive to efficiency in construction and management.

Fitting associations for their new role has involved a revolution in their financing, restoring to them the freedom to set their own rents provided that they keep them within the reach of their own clients, tapping private sources of loan finance, and giving them full financial responsibility for their successes and failures.

We provided the framework for that funding revolution and the expansion of the movement in the Housing Act 1988. Most of the hard grind of devising the detail of the new grant arrangements and all the complex transitional machinery, putting the systems and people in place to run them and educating the movement about the implications and opportunities of the new regime, fell on the Housing Corporation. It had, too, to prepare itself and the housing association movement for a massive expansion in the capital programme. I pay tribute to its immense achievement in getting everything ready to roll in April 1989.

The strain on management, systems and staff throughout the organisation was enormous, and it would be altogether astonishing if everything had run with clockwork precision and smoothness from day one. If anything has gone wrong, it is that the housing association movement has mastered the new arrangements and responded to the challenges and opportunities that they offer even more quickly and impressively than we and the corporation had expected. I think that that is recognised by the hon. Gentleman. That has upset some of the key assumptions on which the corporation's plans for its capital programme in 1989-90 and 1990-91 were based.

Management of a capital programme within a strict and necessary discipline of annual cash limits—on which the Government put great emphasis—is always a complicated business. Individual schemes may take a number of years to plan, agree and execute. Decisions taken in one year will affect expenditure for several years ahead. Planning assumptions about what schemes will cost, or how long they will take to build, can be badly thrown out by events. Hitherto, in the face of all those difficulties, the corporation's record has been exemplary. The 1989-90 programme, however, posed an unprecedented problem —the introduction of a radically new grant system, the impact of which on development costs and times could only be guessed at.

A related difficulty was that evidence of the effects of the new system accumulated only very slowly during the past financial year. Associations' submissions of new schemes for grant approval tend to be heavily concentrated towards the end of the financial year, and that effect was more marked than usual in 1989-90 as associations, naturally, took a little time to familiarise themselves with the new arrangements. Initially, the corporation feared that take up of the programme was inadequate and that a significant underspend was in prospect. That shows how quickly the situation has changed.

The basis on which the corporation could have tested its planning assumptions and taken any corrective action was not available at critical times of the year, and the evidence on which the necessity of emergency action was eventually diagnosed was itself very incomplete and, as it turned out, unrepresentative.

By November last year, it became clear that action would be needed to contain expenditure for the year, and that was taken. Only at the end of December, however, did the corporation have reason to think that spending could not be constrained within the cash limit for the year, and in January my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced a bringing forward of £120 million of expenditure, originally planned for 1990-91, into 1989-90 in order to avert an overspend. The corporation's outturn expenditure for the year was within the revised cash limit.

In January, on the still very limited evidence available, the corporation believed that the high rate of spend was attributable mainly to the increasing use by housing associations of procurement methods such as design and build and off-the-shelf purchase of completed dwellings, under which grant expenditure flows through very rapidly once the scheme has been approved for grant. Allowance was made for that effect in the corporation's announcement, also in January, of its plans for the 1990-91 capital programme.

By March, it had become apparent that the new grant regime was having much more widespread effects on the phasing of expenditure. A marked speeding up was observable in all types of new scheme, including those using traditional procurement techniques. Projects that would have taken four to five years to complete under the old arrangements now seem set to be finished on average within two years. That is excellent news in itself. Homes are being completed and made available for letting much faster than before. Associations have got to grips with the new grant rules and responded to the new incentives to cut costs and development times with impressive speed, but it would have been better news still had the corporation known about it before announcing its plans for 1990-91.

The position now is that the unexpectedly rapid rate of expenditure on schemes approved before the start of the year will leave much less of a margin of uncommitted expenditure for new schemes to be started in the present year.

Mr. Fraser: The Minister is giving us an elegant and intricate description of a financial cock-up. Before he comes to the end of his speech, will he say that he intends to do something about it?

Mr. Chope: The purpose of the debate is to explain the background and not only the inputs but the outputs. I shall be stressing later the importance that the Government attach to output figures and I shall deal with them in some detail.

The corporation is reviewing the prospects in detail with each housing association and will then decide which new projects can be allowed to proceed during the year and which will have to be deferred until 1991-92.

What really matters is the number of new housing association homes being completed. It exceeded our plans for 1989-90 and seems set to do so again by a substantial margin in 1990-91, depending on imponderables such as the weather. The hon. Gentleman was, perhaps understandably, a little backward in paying tribute to the increased output beyond our forecast in both 1989-90 and 1990-91. Although the number of planned scheme approvals will have to be cut back sharply this year, that will have little impact on completions. There are two reasons—the large remaining pipeline of schemes originally approved under the old grant arrangments but on which work has yet to start, and the much faster rate at which schemes approved under the new regime are now likely to be completed.

Overall, we are still on course for a massive expansion of associations' output. Public expenditure provision for the corporation is set to rise from £938 million last year to £1,736 million by 1992-93, and growing use of private loan finance will further add to the programme.

That said, the adjustments now needed to the corporation's programme of approvals in 1990-91 are, of course, extremely disappointing and frustrating not only for associations but those who work with them. Many associations have geared themselves up and taken on staff to take full advantage of the opportunities opened up by the new regime, and now face delays in getting planned schemes off the ground. The hon. Gentleman referred to some of them. All the more reason for paying tribute to the calm and constructive manner in which the National Federation of Housing Associations responded to the situation, despite all the inconvenience and disappointment that its members have faced.

It rightly concluded that the best way forward is not to indulge in recriminations but rather to work closely with the corporation on the development of new programme control arrangements, which will avert any future threat to the corporation's cash limit and give associations a firm forward planning framework—while making due allowance for all the many inevitable uncertainties which lie outside the corporation's, or anybody's, control. Thanks to tremendous efforts on both sides, those new arrangements are now being put in place for the current year.

The hon. Gentleman acknowledges that the corporation has had an immense burden to carry over the last two years, and has had an immense amount of change to digest. The introduction of the new grant arrangements has involved a difficult learning process for the corporation as well as for the movement. It is easy enough now to point to one or two things that could have been done, or said, differently during that process, or to suggest that some of today's difficulties should have been predicted and action taken to pre-empt them. But it is remarkable that today's critics were so silent at a time when suggestions could have been put to good use.

Nor can the corporation be accused of any failure to consult or to take the views of outside bodies. The NFHA was closely involved in setting up the new grant regime, and management consultants were asked to undertake a review of the corporation's systems last autumn. Their report made a number of helpful recommendations on points of detail, but it did not identify a risk of cash control problems of the kind that emerged soon afterwards.

The corporation is, I know, as anxious as anyone to restore full confidence in the programme control and planning process. As I said, new cash control arrangements are already being put in place. A full financial management and policy review of the corporation was in any event due to be carried out this year, and will provide a further opportunity to establish that the programme arrangements are as soundly based as possible. More generally, I know that Sir Christopher Benson, the corporation's new chairman, and his board are giving the supervision of that area of activity a high priority. I am sure, therefore, that those temporary difficulties will soon be behind us, and that the housing association movement can look forward to many years of expansion and prosperity.

The hon. Member for Norwood asked why the Government will not do anything about local authorities' accumulated capital receipts, but he knows that it has always been necessary to control the overall amount of borrowing. Local authorities as a whole have debts of around £45 billion. We believe that if local authorities sell assets, part of the proceeds should be used to repay some of the outstanding debt. That is how the long-term, prudent financing of local authorities will be improved, rather than be undermined by substantially increased debt burdens.

What is important is the number of units being produced. Completions are expected to be largely unaffected by the problems that I described, and the corporation expects the number for 1990-91 to exceed earlier forecasts by 12 per cent. Over the next two years, it is expected that more than 50,000 new homes will be completed for occupation by people in housing need. About 41,000 units are currently in development, between approval and completion—so there is plenty of work for associations to be getting on with.

Mr. Fraser: I acknowledge that the number of completions has increased, and said myself that it had accelerated. However, does not the Minister recognise that, if the number of starts falls in the next two years, that will eventually be reflected in the number of completions? Does he regard 20,000 to 30,000 new homes to rent per year as adequate, when one indicator of demand reveals a figure of more than 100,000 families in need of homes each year?

Mr. Chope: I have already dealt with the number of completions forecast and why the reduction in the number of starts this year will not necessarily lead to a fall in the number of completions in subsequent years. I explained that aspect in some detail.

As to the general issue of people in housing need, the hon. Gentleman will know that the Government are placing great emphasis on encouraging local authorities to make more efficient use of housing resources. The borough which contains the hon. Gentleman's constituency leaves much to be desired in that respect. About a year ago, it had

about 1,000 properties squatted and another 2,000 empty. Last autumn, the Government announced a £250 million initiative to encourage better use of housing stock, which is alongside the increased amount being made available to the Housing Corporation and the housing associations.

The Government are committed to ensuring that there is increased housing output. One way of ensuring that is to attract more private finance into housing. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will recognise that an innovation once regarded with much scepticism by Opposition Members has proved to be effective in practice. We are now getting more for our money because we are attracting private sector investment.

I look forward to the future with nothing other than great confidence. I conclude by again paying tribute to the housing association movement for taking on the major responsibilities that the Government have given it.

Channel Tunnel

10.7 am

Sir Fergus Montgomery (Altrincham and Sale): I am grateful for the opportunity to initiate this Adjournment debate. I suppose that it involves what might be called the northern factor. I was born in north-east England and I represent a north-west constituency. Therefore, the problems of the north are important to me and to my constituents.

I welcome my hon. Friend the Minister of State, who has not long been at his new Department, but who, as Under-Secretary of State for Health, was a kind and courteous Minister. Whenever I took problems to him, he listened sympathetically and always seemed to do something to help. I hope that he will be just as helpful in his new office as he was previously at the Department of Health.

The purpose of the debate is to emphasise the importance to the north-west and to the whole of the north of the channel tunnel. Time is critical. The United Kingdom is already far behind Europe in the realignment of both road and rail links to the channel tunnel. Further delay will be harmful not only to the United Kingdom but the north-west. I hope that the Government will resist all appeals to delay matters and instead will permit Eurorail to go ahead with preparing the private Bill under which Britain's high-speed rail link can be built.

The north-west of England is the second highest regional contributor to gross domestic product. It is a great industrial area and heavily dependent on the old basic industries, and so suffered greatly during the recession. I am delighted that the north-west is recovering extremely well. Some 70 per cent. of our overseas trade is with mainland Europe, which is why the channel tunnel is of such importance to us. With the single market coming into effect in 1992, and the channel tunnel due to open in 1993, we understand its enormous importance to the economic well-being of the north-west.

Last Friday, my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) initiated a debate—he is always very diligent in putting forward the views of his constituents—to urge British Rail to consider Stratford as the terminal for the channel tunnel rail link. That was supported by several hon. Members with constituencies in south London, and I understand their reasons. They believe that such a development at Stratford would be of enormous economic advantage to south London.

A number of my hon. Friends representing constituencies in Kent also supported my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich because they are worried about the effects that the rail link will have on the environment, and I understand their worries. When my hon. Friend the Minister replied to the debate last week he said that, whether King's Cross or Stratford is used, the link will still have to go through Kent. It is important that as little environmental damage as possible is done—hon. Members representing northern constituencies are only too aware of such damage, because the scars from the industrial revolution remained for a long time in the north—and I am sure that that will be borne in mind by British Rail and the Government.

In the north, especially the north-west, we want to grasp opportunities offered by the tunnel. Therefore, improvements to the transport infrastructure are needed.

[Sir Fergus Montgomery]

The north-west is the largest single market area for international rail freight and passenger services outside the south-east of England. We stand to gain increased export and tourist opportunities.

You may be interested to know, Madam Deputy Speaker, that a couple of weeks ago it was warmer and sunnier in Blackpool than on Spain's Costa del Sol. We must also remember that, although the north-west is a great industrial area, it also contains some of the most beautiful areas in the United Kingdom. Transferring more freight from road to rail would have tremendous benefits for the environment and would boost the attractiveness of the region and competitiveness in Europe for existing firms and for inward investment. Taken together, those things offer an enormous plus for the north-west, but people in the region are worried about the delay in reaching decisions on siting tracks to and from the tunnel and about the location of the new rail terminal in London.

I make no bones about it: I believe that King's Cross is the ideal choice, for a number of reasons. First, it would provide direct links to the east coast and midlands main lines and would ensure connections with the west coast main lines. Secondly, King's Cross would provide a good quality interchange for passengers, especially those from the north. Thirdly, it already has a relatively fast link—the Thameslink—to the tunnel. That will be essential until the high-speed passenger link is completed, which is not expected to happen until 1998-99. King's Cross could provide services with or without the high speed passenger link. Fourthly, the King's Cross Railways Bill was deposited by British Rail in November 1989, and any further delay should be avoided.

On the other hand, Stratford has no direct link with the three main lines to the north, it has poor interchange facilities, and no direct link to the tunnel. Therefore, it is a non-starter. King's Cross should be chosen. I understand that it has been suggested that there should be three London terminals—Victoria, King's Cross and Stratford—and that borders on the ridiculous. King's Cross, with its central position and its close proximity to Euston and St. Pancras, is the ideal location. Nowhere else in London can one find three important rail terminals in such a small area as that bounded by King's Cross, St. Pancras and Euston. Also, 66 per cent. of London underground stations on five underground lines are connected directly with King's Cross. The proposed travolator to link King's Cross with Euston will make it the hub of transport in the metropolis.

A further advantage for King's Cross is that it could use the existing route through west Hampstead and so could easily be linked to the west coast main lines. I am firmly of the opinion that British Rail's plan to use King's Cross as the London international terminal is right, and that we should proceed with it as soon as possible.

We should consider the national interest in the House today. No one disputes that the south-east is overcrowded and frustrated and that decentralisation of activities should be encouraged. No one disputes that the motorway system is already under intense pressure. If my hon. Friend the Minister cares to drive from Westminster to the north-west one Friday afternoon, he will discover how terrible the situation is as he drives up the M1 and on to the M6. It would take him a great deal of time, not because of accidents or road works, but because of the number of vehicles on the road. It is extremely frustrating for drivers and must be costly to the nation.

It makes good economic sense to move more traffic from road to rail. We are constantly being told to think about the environment and environmental issues. I understand that the Prime Minister will make a great speech on environmental issues tomorrow. The use of the railway system to haul freight whenever it is practicable has considerable advantages compared with the available alternatives.

I want the economy of the north-west to benefit as much as possible from investment in the channel tunnel. Therefore, investment in infrastructure is essential. At the moment, there is an enormous amount of investment in the Lille region in France because, rightly or wrongly, and not by accident but by design, Lille will be the junction for the London-Paris and London-Brussels rail links. Lille will be important and the French are pouring enormous amounts of money into the area. The rewards for the future growth of the economy in the Lille area are encouraging.

In the north-west, we have an efficient group called the North West Channel Tunnel Group, comprising the North West Local Authority Rail Forum, Greater Manchester Economic Development Ltd., the development corporations of Central Manchester, Merseyside and Trafford Park, Inward, English Estates (North West), all the chambers of commerce in the north-west, and the north-west Confederation of British Industry. That is a formidable team. The group has produced a booklet which I am sure the Minister has seen, called "Capitalising on the Channel Tunnel: Action for North West England". In its foreword it says:

"The North West of England is a region of great economic importance to the UK economy as a whole, and to secure future growth it must be able to compete effectively in the European Community when the Single European Market is completed by 1993.

Transport infrastructure is a key to the North West being able to achieve this, and the Channel Tunnel promises to make international rail freight and passenger services a major element of transport in the Europe of the 1990s. The North West is the region of the UK with potentially the most to gain and the most to lose from the Channel Tunnel, as the largest single market area for freight and passenger services outside the South East.

It is essential that the North West has effective international rail freight and passenger services, so that the region can take full advantage of the Single Market and the transport benefits offered by the Channel Tunnel. It is important to establish business plans from the outset which will promote economic opportunities as fully as possible.

The North West Channel Tunnel Group has considered both road and rail options for gaining access to the Channel Tunnel from the North West. In spite of road improvements planned in the Government Report 'Trunk Roads-England: Into the 1990s', road congestion is unlikely to be substantially eased. The Group's view is that the focus needs to be on rail to provide fast and reliable movement of passengers and freight to and from mainland Europe, because of advantages in cost, time and convenience.

For this reason, the North West Channel Tunnel Group has been formed from a wide range of business, economic and public sector interests in the region. Our aim is to co-ordinate North West efforts to secure fast and reliable rail access to mainland Europe, and promote the economic opportunities this will bring.

British Rail has recently published its Plan for international rail services and facilities for UK regions, but the proposals for the North West fall far short of what the region needs.

Time is a critical factor. There are less than three years to go before the Single Market is fully enacted in 1992, and only just over three years before the Channel Tunnel is planned to open in 1993. There is little time available to achieve even the most basic improvements to international rail infrastructure for the North West. The North West Channel Tunnel Group is determined to ensure that the region's transport infrastructure aspirations for 1993 and beyond are understood and achieved as soon as possible."

In not too many words, those are the basic aims that I am trying to put forward.

The Government have injected more money into the north-west than any other Government. Enormous sums have been poured into the three development corporations at Trafford Park, Manchester Central and Merseyside, to say nothing of the enormous amount of money that has gone into inner-city funding. Those initiatives are paying off. Anybody can see the benefits that have accrued in the north-west since the Government took office. It would be extremely sad if those advantages were allowed to wither away because of our failure to attend to the transport infrastructure.

10.20 am

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): Thank you for allowing me to contribute to this debate, Madam Deputy Speaker. I endorse the powerful remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery). I underline my concern about our friends and colleagues in Kent. It would be churlish and selfish of us in the north-west to continue to endorse the benefits of the channel tunnel rail link without remembering the problems that they and their constituents face.

Clearly, much of our discussion about the benefits of the channel tunnel in the north-west would be academic without a high-quality rail link between London and the channel. I understand the pressures that my colleagues are under and I hope that, even at this late stage, the Government will recognise the environmental impact of the line in Kent and perhaps find some mechanism to resolve the problem. Without the symbol of commitment —the link between London and Kent—much of the excitement of and possibilities for the channel tunnel will be lost.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) and I recently attended a meeting with local authorities in the Fylde coast area and we discussed inward investment. That meeting was held with the assistance of an organisation called Inward, which has had much success in recent years in bringing Japanese and American investment to the north-west. A powerful message came from the discussions. Representatives at the meeting said, "In your discussions on the channel tunnel, don't let the impression be created that the north-west of England is cut off from that vital transport link to Europe." They pointed out that companies in Japan, America and elsewhere invest in this country because of our attitude to 1992 and the creation of the single market.

This country has much to offer, but the key to taking advantage of it is a good transport link with Europe. The tunnel is an important feature of that. Another key to taking advantage of the channel tunnel is our rail links with centres such as Manchester. There may be a debate about the correctness of the capacity of freight and passenger transport. That is something that the market will have to prove, but, in this age of the railway, we need to do all we can to encourage people to use rail as an alternative mode of transport.

I emphasise the strength of feeling in our part of Lancashire about the electrification of the line from Blackpool to Manchester. It took some time for me to prise from British Rail the actual costs involved in the project—about £30 million—but it said that, as part of its infill electrification programme, the Blackpool to Manchester line is viable and at the top of the list. The advent of direct links with the channel tunnel means that that infill project is another attractive way of persuading people to use railways to journey to Europe. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister, when considering the development of the domestic rail network, to look at that perspective.

Also on passenger services, I emphasise the need for my hon. Friend, in his discussions with British Rail, to try to get it to think even more about the commercial opportunities that the channel tunnel rail link will have. British Rail seems reluctant to recognise that passengers boarding trains in the north-west will want the same baggage facilities as are provided by airlines. It is reassuring to know that if, one is flying from Manchester to London and then to Strasbourg, one's luggage will end up at the final destination. British Rail seems reluctant to move into that new era.

My hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale talked about the advantages of King's Cross—I endorse what he said—and he underlined the importance of a travolator link. A travolator would cater for the passenger and be a powerful inducement. As one can walk to terminals 1, 2 or 3 at London airport, so would one be able to go from Euston to King's Cross and then travel to the channel tunnel. The thought of having to carry their bags could put people off. Such a facility would make all the difference to exploiting the enormous benefits of travelling by rail to continental Europe.

There appears to be indecision about where the various freightyards and co-ordinating points will be. It is important that British Rail does whatever it can to remove that indecision. I must sound a political note to my hon. Friend the Minister. There is little use in bodies such as Lancashire county council continually writing to Members of Parliament berating them on this subject. When I write to them and ask, "Where is your strategy and plan? Where would you like the freightyards?" they reply, "We are concerned about it, but we do not have any specific ideas."

There is a great danger that bodies such as Lancashire county council are trying to exploit difficult decisions simply for narrow political gain, and I object to that. Conservative Members have shown their dedication and commitment to the channel link and will fight hard for it. As my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale has pointed out, no Opposition Member from the north-west is present.

It is important that British Rail does all that it can to induce a railway culture for those who, until now, have transported freight by road. There is a generation of freight managers who might say, "Yes, we will use the channel tunnel rail link," but, at the moment, their thoughts are road-bound. Fully to exploit the potential, industry must demonstrate its positive commitment to using the rail link. That would encourage British Rail to take an even more positive attitude to this important development.

10.27 am

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): I am grateful for the opportunity to say a few words. I thoroughly endorse the comments by my hon. Friends the Members for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) and for Fylde (Mr. Jack) on this important topic. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister on his new role, and I urge him to persuade British Rail—I know that it has made considerable progress over the past decade—to make a new effort to improve its passenger and freight facilities to the level that we now regard as the norm in air transport. I should like the great improvements that have been made in consumer comfort and the operating procedures of air transport networks—more specifically through the privatisation of British Airways—to be applied to our ground transportation system, and to British Rail in particular, so that the customer is put at the head of the queue and is provided with the best possible transport service. That is vital for people in the north-west and for others in this country.

Great Britain is on the edge of Europe. The channel tunnel will make certain that, in terms of travel time, this country is much closer to many continental centres not only in western Europe but increasingly in eastern Europe as that part of the continent, under the light of free enterprise, moves towards a much more sophisticated and prosperous economy in the years ahead. That is even more true of the north-west. Great Britain is on the edge of Europe; clearly, we in the north-west feel that we are even further from the centres of Europe than the south-east is. In many ways, the channel tunnel is even more important to the north than it is to the south-east.

Let us consider the distances and times it takes to reach places in Europe, and the distance and time it takes to reach London. It takes the same time to travel from Newcastle to London as it does from Preston to London, although the distance from Newcastle to London is considerably greater. In terms of travel to London, let alone to the continent, the north-west is the poor relation of the north-east. For one reason or another, our rail link has been neglected in the past. It is important that it is improved, especially with the completion of the channel tunnel only two or three years away.

There are two areas for which it is important that action is taken quickly on the rail link. First, the port of Liverpool could benefit tremendously from the channel tunnel as an entrepot to Europe and as a one-stop facility for cargo coming across the Atlantic or from elsewhere. Cargo could come to Liverpool rather than to Rotterdam and containers could be taken through the channel tunnel. Liverpool can be revived provided that there is a decent rail link between that great city and the continent. It is important that British Rail appreciates that fact.

Secondly, and a little closer to home, in the Fylde we have our own little silicon valley which is rapidly building up. Its core is British Aerospace and around it are the high-tech facilities that such a core activity tends to draw together. If we are to develop that area, it is vital that the communications are there so that people who want to work and live in the Fylde area, but who need to correspond, to travel and to meet people on the continent who are involved in similar activities are given the facilities to do so. That would draw the area closer to the centre of Europe. The channel tunnel link and a faster rail link to the north-west would help to achieve that.

Nineteen ninety-two will be with us in a few years. We must take advantage of that common market and we can do so with the construction of the channel tunnel. However, in the north-west, it is increasingly being seen that the direct rail link with the tunnel will be vital for the port of Liverpool and for the area around British Aerospace, and for the whole economy of the north-west to take the best advantage of the opportunities provided by the unitary market in the coming decade.

10.32 am

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): I want to begin my remarks at the point where my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) finished his. Clearly, the major danger for the north-west is that we shall be on the periphery of the main activity in the economy unless we have connections to the main artery of the future and to the biggest British trade market, which is Europe. It is essential that, when the tunnel is in full operation, the north-west is not left out.

At present, the estimate for future north-west freight to Europe is 2 million tonnes a year. That means that, along with north Wales, the north-west is the biggest freight region in the country. It is bigger than the Home Counties or the south-east, so it is a market that should be considered. As my hon. Friends have said, we cannot underestimate the importance of the channel tunnel to the export markets for north-west companies. The proximity to the tunnel will determine the location of new factories and jobs, and inward investment. If we do not have those connections, we are likely to be left out.

As my hon. Friends have said, we need two essential factors in our favour. First, we must have good freight links to the tunnel; secondly, we must have good passenger links. At present, there are no final decisions on the main terminal and the fast link from London to the tunnel. The only option available to us in the north-west is King's Cross and the fast link through Kent.

The other option, of Ove Arup and Stratford, is irrelevant to us, as Stratford is too remote from the north-west main line and will slow down the passage of freight from the north-west to the tunnel. The Ove Arup proposal has not been properly costed, especially in relation to tunnelling under the Thames. Ove Arup proposes a Berne gauge from Europe which will reach us in the north-west in 2003, which is far too long to wait. The whole north-west economy could have been destroyed by the time it arrived.

There is a need for an imminent decision by British Rail about the freight terminals so that planning can go ahead. There are only three options. The first is to develop a sea port for Merseyside, at Garston or Seaforth, which is container-based; secondly, there could be a similar one at Trafford Park, which my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) has already mentioned; thirdly, there could probably be one in the centre of Lancashire at Haydock, joining up at Crewe for onward passage to the tunnel. It is important to note that freight is viable when the distance travelled is more than 200 miles, so it is a viable option for us to send freight through the tunnel from the north-west to the European markets.

British Rail's estimates for passengers are far too conservative. It proposes to order 18 trains for passenger use, of which only seven will be capable of going north of

London because they will need to be divided. British Rail envisages only one train a day going beyond London, compared with the 15 trains it envisages will come from Paris and stop at London. That is not adequate. We believe that we shall be able to develop the necessary traffic that will go on to the north-west. If one is keen on skiing, for example, it would be possible to go all the way to Moutiers. We shall be able to pack those trains with north-west skiing enthusiasts through the winter months.

British Rail must start making decisions. We are three years from the opening of the channel tunnel and two years from the implementation of the single market. Not a yard of track has been laid, and final decisions have not been made on essential structural matters which are important to the north-west. If it is not to be left behind in industrial development, decisions must be made soon. I know from experience that my hon. Friend the Minister is a man of action. I look to him to speed up the process and to see that the north-west is properly catered for.

10.37 am

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) for his kind remarks at the beginning of this brief debate. I note with interest that there is strong Conservative representation from the north-west. The debate was initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale and we have had excellent contributions from my hon. Friends the Members for Fylde (Mr. Jack), for Wyre (Mr. Mans) and for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind). I notice also here my hon. Friends the Members for Warrington, South (Mr. Butler), for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham), and for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville) and, not least, my hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad). That is a truly magnificent sign that Conservative Members strongly support the best interests of business and industry in the north-west and that they want to ensure that, when the channel tunnel opens, the north-west makes immediate, active and thorough use of the enormous opportunities that it will present.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): As the Minister seems to be taking a roll call, I am intervening simply to make the point that I am here. The Minister referred to the paucity of Liberal Democrat Members for the north of England. I suppose that I could be regarded as one of the Liberal Democrats with a seat nearest to the north-west, so I hope that the Minister will accept that Liberal Democrats are interested enough to listen to and participate in these debates.

Mr. Freeman: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman reminded me of the paucity of Liberal Democrats representing the north-west.

One of the most important responsibilities from now on is to ensure that, when the channel tunnel opens in 1993, we and British Rail have taken the necessary steps in terms of our public infrastructure—not only for passengers but for freight—to ensure that we exploit the channel tunnel and the great advantages that it offers in 1993, let alone at the turn of the century. I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West that I shall concentrate not only on the grand design, but on the detail of our plans.

The debate has been most useful and has aired the north-west's wish to participate in the benefits that the channel tunnel will bring to the United Kingdom as a whole. My hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale will be pleased to know that a major objective of Government policy is to ensure that the regions beyond the south-east can benefit as much as possible from the new direct rail link between the United Kingdom and the continental rail networks that the tunnel will provide. One of the most important benefits that the tunnel will bring to the more distant regions is the opportunity of the provision of through rail freight services. Such services will assist economic development throughout the United Kingdom and, by encouraging the transfer of freight from road to rail, will bring environmental benefits throughout the United Kingdom.

Prompted by the debate, it would be a good idea if I were to put something on my desk that would serve as a reminder that, when looking at public transport infrastructure expenditure proposals, we in the Department of Transport must always remember the need to think about the whole of Great Britain, and not just about London and the south-east, where there are great and pressing problems. I assure my hon. Friends that, when I return to the Department of Transport later this morning, I shall take steps to ensure that the first thing that I shall see on my desk when I return after the Whitsun recess is a notice to remind myself to "Think Britain". It will remind me to think about the implications for the whole of Britain when considering not only British Rail's investment, but investments in light rail schemes, buses and road programmes. I use those words advisedly.

I well understand the attitude of some—although I think that it is misguided—who fear that the north-west might be cut off from the economic developments on the mainland of Europe unless there are proper investments in the infrastructure to link us, by rail, with the rest of Europe through the tunnel. I shall explain briefly why I think those fears are misplaced. When reviewing investment propositions from British Rail, we should constantly remind ourselves of the importance of linking the regions and provinces of Britain into the tunnel and onwards into Europe.

It is important that we do not get the importance of the tunnel out of context. Although it will be extremely significant to Britain's economy, it is estimated that, when it opens in 1993, it will rank 12th or 13th in importance when set against Britain's ports. It will take only a relatively small proportion of our freight traffic. Although, as I have said, I do not underestimate its significance, we must not forget Britain's great ports, which will continue to contribute to our economic prosperity and growth.

Last December, British Rail published its plan for international services. This followed an extensive consultation exercise and the proposals represent British Rail's current view of commercially viable services using the tunnel. It has been said that these proposals are inadequate. We must remember, however, that British Rail is required by the Government—and by Parliament—to run its international services on a proper commercial basis. Section 42 of the Channel Tunnel Act 1987, which prohibits subsidy to British Rail for its international services, was widely supported at the time, despite the current claims by the Opposition that it should be repealed.

It is interesting that the Labour party's current official policy is to consider repealing section 42, and hence permit a subsidy from the taxpayer for the international services

[Mr. Freeman]

—I draw a distinction between international and provincial services, such as Network SouthEast—which would therefore permit unfair competition with the ferries and the airlines, which are not subsidised. The Labour party is going back on its previous clear commitment and clear support for section 42 of the Channel Tunnel Act. The Government will not repeal or suggest the repeal of that section. It was introduced to ensure that ferries, ports and other international transport operators would not face unfair competition from a subsidised rail service. We do not believe that the situation has changed. British Rail already runs its freight and InterCity operations successfully on a commercial basis and there is no reason why its international services should not enjoy similar success.

It is perhaps worth reminding the House that British Rail's so-called "section 40" plan sets out its current view of commercially viable services. I pay tribute to those in the north-west who, in a large measure, were instrumental in encouraging the adoption of section 40 of the Channel Tunnel Act and for the document that was published in December 1989, which is headed "International Rail Services for the United Kingdom", a copy of which is in the Library. I hope that all hon. Members will have the chance to study it. I know that all my hon. Friends, with their great interest in the economic prosperity of the north-west, have already done so.

Section 40 requires British Rail to bring forward its current assessment of the passenger and freight opportunities that are presented by the channel tunnel. I repeat that the Act requires British Rail to publish the document now. It is current. We should not fall into the trap of believing that this is British Rail's last word, especially on freight traffic. British Rail must naturally be realistic, cautious and pragmatic about its present assessment of the passenger and freight opportunities that are presented by the tunnel. However, the position will change and I hope that, during the months and years before the opening of the services in 1993, my hon. Friends will not be reluctant to draw to the attention of British Rail and the Department of Transport any opportunities for passenger and freight business that they believe that British Rail is missing.

British Rail will keep its section 40 responsibilities and report under review both up to the opening of the tunnel and thereafter, as it is required to do under the Channel Tunnel Act. The plan will be modified as the developing pattern of demand and the associated commercial opportunities become clearer. I am sure that British Rail would welcome some input from local businesses and business organisations, so that it can formulate an accurate assessment of the demand for its services.

I should like to come to the north-west at an early date, not only to meet my hon. Friends again, but also to meet businesses and other organisations there to discuss their views of the opportunities that will be presented by the channel tunnel. If my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale would be kind enough to chair such a meeting, I should be delighted to attend. If they can, I hope that my other hon. Friends will participate in such a meeting so that we can demonstrate yet again both the Government's and my hon. Friends' commitment to the prosperity of the north-west.

British Rail's initial proposals for the north-west provide capacity for some 540,000 passengers per annum on the daily services to Paris and Brussels. That is about two and a half times the number of passengers who chose to fly between Manchester and those destinations in 1988. In addition, a night service from Glasgow will also call at Manchester, offering further passenger capacity. So it is not fair to castigate British Rail for providing insufficient places from the regions. One difference between the rail and air facilities is of course that, whilst one can catch a flight at various times throughout the day, one will be able to catch a train only twice a day—once during the morning and once at night—in order to reach one's destination, whether Paris or Brussels, through the tunnel.

However, each train, represents a huge investment by British Rail—it plans to invest over £1 billion to enable a full passenger and freight service to London and beyond to commence on the day that the channel tunnel opens—and British Rail must be satisfied that any further services would be commercially viable. It is not open to British Rail simply to accept statements that a market might grow up if the extra train is run; the market must be clearly demonstrable. In any event, British Rail could not match the frequency of the current high-quality InterCity services from the north-west to London that run throughout the day.

There will always be passengers who find it more convenient to use the InterCity services and change in London for services from Waterloo through the channel tunnel. The alternative would be to use the through-train services, but, as I said, they will, unavoidably and inevitably, be relatively infrequent. It is important that we should not place on British Rail any obligation to run subsidised services. My hon. Friends would not thank me for placing a burden on British Rail that worsened its financial results. British Rail must respond in a forward-looking way to commercial opportunities that are available, not only for passengers and freight. That is its best judgment at present, but undoubtedly that judgment will change as we obtain a clearer picture of the opportunities for freight and passenger traffic through the tunnel.

Some passengers will always opt for air travel because of time considerations. It is important to remember that the travelling time by rail from Manchester to the continent is likely to be between five and six hours, whereas flying time is only about one hour. I am now dealing with 1993—I shall come on to 1998, the turn of the century and the rail link in a moment. However, rail journeys will have the advantage of offering the passenger travel from city centre to city centre without having to change. I know that that is an important consideration for some people, particularly when they are on holiday. That time difference may be an important consideration for those travelling on business, although perhaps of less significance to tourists and leisure travellers.

As I said earlier, one of the major benefits to the regions of the tunnel will be the opportunity to provide through rail freight services between the United Kingdom and the Continent. British Rail has said that it expects 70 per cent. of channel tunnel freight to come from the regions. It is important, however, that the ability of rail to supplant road transport should not be exaggerated—a 50 per cent. increase in rail transport would reduce road transport by less than 5 per cent.

I take the point made by my hon. Friends about the environmental benefits of moving freight by rail as opposed to road. I am a frequent commuter on the M1 to my constituency and on up the M6 to Manchester and the north-west, where my family roots and those of my wife are. I am a frequent user of the motorways and I understand the strength of my hon. Friends' point. However, it is important to realise that the reduction of road congestion by moving a significant proportion of freight by rail is relatively limited, simply because so much greater a proportion of the movement of freight is already by road.

Nevertheless, British Rail estimates that its services will take 400,000 lorry journeys off the roads, with the environmental benefits that that will bring. BR is negotiating with the private sector for a network of regional freight terminal sites, at least one of which will serve the north-west region, and it will announce the chosen sites during this year.

I take the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde and other hon. Friends that the sooner that British Rail can announce the location of the freight depot the better. That will enable industry in the north-west to plan its affairs in a more logical and coherent way. I accept the strength of the argument of my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde and I shall encourage British Rail to reach a sensible and commercial decision as quickly as possible.

There have been calls to provide further terminals in the north-west. I stress again that all British Rail's investments must be commercially viable. British Rail is currently negotiating with the road haulage operators and industry to find out what locations and facilities would meet their needs so that it can ensure that businesses have the best possible access to the rail network. British Rail is anxious to compete effectively in the international freight transport market. It intends to use new wagon technology which can provide the same loading capabilities as those in mainland Europe. It is considering the possibility of developing a fleet of "swap-body" wagons so that containers can be more easily transferred between rail and road transport.

The part played by both the proposed second international passenger station at King's Cross and the proposed dedicated rail link between the tunnel and London in relation to regional services is sometimes misunderstood. I should emphasise that neither of these initiatives is essential for commencing the running of through services in 1993 when the tunnel opens. British Rail plans to operate the services on existing lines as soon as the tunnel opens. That is not to say that the two projects would not, in due course, lead to reduced journey times and, in the case of King's Cross, provide an easier interchange to the inter-capital services for those passengers who choose to take the inter-city connections to London from the north. I should also stress that neither development would affect freight traffic, which British Rail intends to run on existing lines.

My hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale mentioned the Hampstead curve. I attach some importance to that. I understand that British Rail has a Bill before Parliament to give it power to construct that curve—the link between the west coast main line and the terminal at King's Cross. My hon. Friend and others who spoke on the subject raised the importance of further investment in the west coast main line, which was electrified 15 to 20 years ago. It needs further infrastructure investment to straighten the line and improve the speed of services from the north-west.

The Hampstead curve is important. It will enable passengers travelling down the west coast main line—an improved line in the later 1990s—to come straight into the King's Cross terminal, either for through services or for connecting services, if that is more convenient. British Rail attaches great importance to that, and so do I.

I have so far concentrated on the rail links from the north-west to the channel tunnel. The Department is also undertaking a major programme of trunk road expansion as announced in the White Paper "Roads for Prosperity" last May. Schemes which will improve links from the region to London and the tunnel include widening of the M6, M1 and M25, as well as substantial provision for trunk road improvements in Kent, which will naturally bear the brunt of the additional traffic—although, even here, the additional traffic arising from completion of the tunnel will be small compared with the overall growth of traffic.

To sum up, both the Government and British Rail fully appreciate the important opportunities that the tunnel will open up for the more distant regions of the United Kingdom as well as for the south-east. We support British Rail's strategy of providing commercially attractive services to its customers. British Rail's proposed services for the north-west form the first step in assessing the market for tunnel traffic. They will be revised if the emerging pattern of demand shows an opening for further commercial services so that the tunnel's opportunities for all regions are exploited to the full.

I look forward to coming to the north-west, as I have promised my hon. Friends. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale will set up and chair a seminar or conference and that he will invite to it commercial organisations that are interested in the future prosperity of the north-west, which has been ably represented by the ample number of hon. Members from the north-west present this morning. I look forward to discussing with him and his colleagues their views on further steps that British Rail could take to improve services, not just between now and the opening of the tunnel, but for the next decade.

It being Eleven o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *interrupted the proceedings, pursuant to the Order [11 May].*

Business of the House

11 am

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Tim Renton): With permission, I should like to make a short business statement. I apologise to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) for cutting into the time for his Adjournment debate.

The business for Wednesday 6 June will now be as follows:

Opposition day (14th Allotted Day). There will be a debate on the welfare of children on an Opposition motion followed by a motion on the Education (School Teachers' Pay and Conditions) Order 1990.

The business for the rest of the week remains as announced.

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his statement. Next Wednesday we shall seek to demonstrate the Government's betrayal of the younger generation and the lack of support for families throughout the decade of Conservative Government. We also welcome the opportunity afforded by the order to demonstrate the Government's shabby treatment of the teaching profession over the past decade, not least the removal of the basic democratic right to negotiate their own wages.

Can the Patronage Secretary tell us whether the Prime Minister has informed the deputy Prime Minister of the major change in Government policy that she will announce tomorrow on the Government's U-turn——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is rather wide of the business for 6 June.

Mr. McNamara: With the greatest respect, Mr. Speaker, this is a business statement. We have learnt only today that the Government are making a statement——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to page 296 of "Erskine May". This is a Back Benchers' day and he should not ask questions that go wide of the statement.

Mr. McNamara: With respect, Mr. Speaker, the Government have chosen to interrupt today's business to make a business statement. Today the Government announced from No. 10 Downing street that tomorrow the Prime Minister will make a major policy statement on global warming, but not in the House. Clearly, the Government have changed their policy. When the Government's business manager comes to the House, the Opposition are entitled to ask when the House will have an opportunity to ask the Government about their change in policy and the implications that it has for a whole range of policies.

Mr. Renton: If, as the hon. Gentleman says, he will tell the House next Wednesday about the Labour party's views on teachers' salaries, he will find the House empty, because we shall all be on holiday. Perhaps there is a slight mistake in his calendar. He is wrong to say that the order demonstrates shabby treatment of teachers by the Government. On the contrary, it gives effect to the teachers' pay settlement for 1990-91. Many authorities have not felt able to pay the new rates until the parliamentary process is finished. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science is simply anxious to get the teachers' new salaries into their pockets as soon as possible and preferably in time for their July pay. That is why we are arranging for the order to be debated as soon as possible.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Particularly since the Bank of England has had the report on the House of Fraser since August 1988, and in view of the Select Committee report, is there any possibility of the House having an opportunity to find out why the Bank of England has not yet decided whether the Fayeds are fit and proper persons to hold a blanket licence?

Mr. Renton: I note my hon. Friend's remarks. As I said in my brief business statement, the business for the rest of the week when the House reassembles after the Whit recess remains unchanged. I shall certainly see that my hon. Friend's remarks are passed on to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): On 6 June, the Secretary of State for Scotland will answer Scottish questions. There is widespread anxiety at today's announcement that Nirex is planning to drill 6,000 holes in Caithness and Sutherland in its exploration to find a dump for nuclear waste. People are fed up with that part of Scotland being seen as the repository for nuclear waste, with all the dangers that it entails. Will the right hon. Gentleman ask the Secretary of State for Scotland to make a statement on 6 June to give Scottish Members from all parts of Scotland and from all parties an opportunity to ask questions about this matter of great concern?

Mr. Renton: It is perhaps fortunate that the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland is sitting close to me on the Front Bench. He has reminded me that these are testing holes only and that Scotland is not alone in having this privilege. I understand that similar testing holes are being drilled in Cumbria. Nevertheless, I shall ensure that the hon. Gentleman's remarks are referred to the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): Does my right hon. Friend share my surprise that, on 6 June, when the Opposition have a Supply day, they will not give the House a first opportunity to scrutinise the Labour party policy document issued today? Does that not show that the Labour party continues to wish to hide it from proper scrutiny by this House?

Mr. Renton: At the risk of enlarging the subject slightly, I note that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) referred to the shabby treatment shown by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in not making a policy statement to the House tomorrow, although the House is to be in recess. Indeed, my hon. Friend is right: if there is to be any policy statement in the House, it should be a Labour policy statement. We have heard a great deal about it on the news this morning and a certain amount about it from Conservative Back Benchers yesterday, but we have not heard anything about it from the Labour Front Bench.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I appreciate the Government's desire to have extra pay put in the July pay packet of teachers in England and Wales. Could such a facility be extended to Northern Ireland, and perhaps even Scotland, by an early statement to that effect?

Mr. Renton: The draft order that we shall debate on Wednesday 6 June follows a pattern similar to that of the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1988. I shall certainly ensure that the hon. Gentleman's remarks are passed on to the Secretaries of State for Northern Ireland and for Scotland.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): My right hon. Friend will have been in the House yesterday when my hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) moved the Second Reading of his excellent Bill on the roof tax. He will undoubtedly have noticed that no Labour Member voted in favour of it, although two voted against it. Will he take an opportunity to talk to his opposite number during the first week after the recess and suggest that perhaps the Labour party could use time on its Opposition day to introduce a debate on the roof tax so that the rest of us and the country can find out what it has in mind?

Mr. Renton: I thank my hon. Friend for that interesting suggestion. It is possible for the Opposition to split their Supply day on Wednesday into two halves. I note that the Opposition Chief Whip is sitting opposite. He will undoubtedly inform his colleagues of the suggestion that the Labour party might decide to debate the roof tax on the first half of Wednesday afternoon.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): After we have dealt with the business proposed for the evening of Wednesday 6 June, may we have a debate on the future of the footwear industry? Yesterday it was announced in Cockermouth in my constituency that a famous footwear manufacturer was in financial difficulties, a receiver had been appointed and 400 jobs were at risk. The reason for that dreadful news is that interest rates and imports are damaging the industry severely. May we have a debate on that important matter, because I have many anxious families in that area at this time?

Mr. Renton: I am sorry, as the House will be, to hear the news about the firm in the hon. Gentleman's constituency going into receivership. I shall pass his remarks on to my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House and perhaps the hon. Gentleman will find an opportunity to raise this in an Adjournment debate after the Whitsun recess.

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): Could my right hon. Friend assure me that the time allowed for debate on teachers' pay will be adequate to rebut the misleading statements we have just heard from the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara)? Will it also include an opportunity to review briefly the Government's new arrangements and proposals for the restitution of teachers' pay rights? Perhaps we could also discuss the fact that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science has agreed to the excellent results from the interim advisory committee on teachers' pay?

Mr. Renton: I very much agree with my hon. Friend's second point. The simple purpose of the order is to ensure that all education authorities can proceed immediately to pay the new rates of pay. Some have already done so without waiting for the outcome of the parliamentary process, and others are hesitant to do so. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is anxious to get the salary increases into the pay packets as soon as possible. Given my hon. Friend's customary ingenuity, I am sure that he will find an opportunity to widen the debate slightly on that Wednesday evening.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): After announcing the business for Wednesday 6 June, would the Minister be kind enough to consider having a debate on crowd safety? In June there are two major pop festivals at Glastonbury and Knebworth and at a recent concert of a group rejoicing in the name of New Kids on the Block——

Mr. Foulkes: Excellent.

Mr. Janner: —which I assume from my hon. Friend's reaction is an excellent group. Nevertheless, that concert resulted in 30 people being taken to hospital and between 600 and 700 being injured. After the problems at the Donington race course concerts in the county of Leicestershire, when youngsters were killed, the time has now come for the Government not merely to ask the Health and Safety Executive to produce guidelines that no one must follow, but to take urgent action. We should have a debate on that matter swiftly.

Mr. Renton: Although I appreciate the seriousness of the subject that the hon. and learned Gentleman has raised, I would again point out that Wednesday 6 June is an Opposition day. It would be possible for the Opposition Front Bench spokesmen to decide to have half a day only on the welfare of children and to devote the other half, if not to Labour's roof tax, to the subject of crowd safety. That apart, I hope that the hon. and learned Gentleman will have an opportunity to raise this serious and important subject during an Adjournment debate.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the debate on 6 June will enable the Government to confirm that teachers' pay is 30 per cent. better in real terms than it was in 1979 when the Government came to office? There are now more teachers per pupil than ever before. Will my right hon. Friend also confirm that the Secretary of State for Education and Science is having firm negotiations with teachers unions within recent days, according to my inside knowledge——

Mr. Foulkes: Inside?

Mr. Greenway: Inside, in the sense that I have heard from the unions concerned of discussions with the Secretary of State about the restoration of their negotiating rights. That is supported by all of us.

Mr. Renton: My hon. Friend, with the precision and accuracy that befits an ex-headmaster, puts the case very well. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be pleased to confirm the precise point my hon. Friend has made about the beneficial treatment of teachers at the moment.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Does the Patronage Secretary realise that it is important that we have an urgent statement on the current report from the Select Committee on Members' Interests in which a particular lobbyist has said that he has been paying undisclosed sums to unnamed Members, but has refused to give information about that on the ground of commercial confidentiality? We need a statement as soon as we come back from the recess, as we cannot have a

[Mr. Alan Williams]

situation in which lobbyists use commercial confidentiality to subvert the purposes and intentions of our Register of Members' Interests.

Mr. Renton: My understanding is that the Select Committee on Members' Interests, chaired by my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith), is looking into the question of lobbying. It is for that reason that the evidence to which the right hon. Gentleman has just referred was given to that Select Committee. I do not believe that the Committee's report is ready yet, but it is actively looking into the subject, and I am sure it will lay a report before the House as soon as it is ready to do so.

Sir Hal Miller (Bromsgrove): Further to the call by the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) for a debate on crowd safety, would my right hon. Friend reflect on the fact that the Opposition opposed the football safety measures we put before the House and the requirement in many local authority byelaws that adequate notice should be given of processions? Does my right hon. Friend agree that they should do a great deal more to ensure that events such as anti-poll tax protests do not get out of hand and cause not only a great threat to public safety, but a great deal of commercial damage?

Mr. Renton: My hon. Friend makes an extremely important point. The Opposition's attitude to crowd safety, particularly at football matches, is dominated by hypocrisy in their regular resistance to the positive measures that we have sought to introduce. The real worry about the anti-poll tax campaign is that, if it continues, there will be fewer and fewer Labour Members left on the Opposition Benches, as we presume that more and more of them will resign the Labour Whip because they will feel that they cannot, in all conscience, remain members of the parliamentary Labour party.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I want to raise an important matter with you. Yesterday the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities, in reply to a question, said that he was holding urgent investigations into allegations about the allocation of resources in the Bradford metropolitan district council. Despite the fact that the outcome of that investigation was unknown to him, he went on to urge community charge payers in those areas to examine

"whether they have some recourse under the law as it now stands."—[*Official Report*, 23 May 1990; Vol. 173, c. 280.]

The Minister holds quasi-judicial responsibilities in relation to local government, including my district council of Bradford. It is clear that he will also hold a pivotal position in reaching decisions about the allocation of resources to local authorities, including my own.

Is it not extraordinary for a Minister in that position to make a statement urging people in Bradford, including my constituents, to examine whether they can take legal action against an authority on matters that are still under investigation by that Minister? Obviously that will bear an important relevance to decisions he will make shortly about the distribution of resources to Bradford.

Mr. Speaker: I am constantly asked to monitor answers to questions, but that is not the role of the Chair. The Minister must take responsibility for any answer he gives; it is not a matter for me.

Mr. Hind: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) asked my right hon. Friend the Patronage Secretary about the Knebworth and Donington concerts. The implication was that the Government are doing nothing about that matter. However, the hon. and learned Gentleman misled the House, because, the Entertainments (Increased Penalties) Bill, a private Member's Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South (Mr. Bright), which was debated in this House and is now in the House of Lords, proposed that anyone with a licence to hold an entertainment event should be fined a maximum of £20,000 or be subject to six months imprisonment if they were in breach of that licence granted by local government. The Labour party opposed that clause tooth and nail in Committee and——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We must not have a debate on this; the Bill is not yet law and it has not had its Third Reading in the House.

Mr. Hind: I appreciate that, but I am making the point that, far from doing nothing about it, the Government supported that Bill and——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That may be, but it is not a matter for me.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a private Members' day and the hon. Member should bear in mind the fact that he is taking time from other hon. Members.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I am wondering whether you would be prepared, Mr. Speaker, to censure those hon. Members who on 12 January of this year shouted "Smear" at me when I raised the question of payments made by Mr. Greer to Members of Parliament, since what I alleged at that time has now been proved to be correct. Is it not now——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member is taking up time. That and other matters will no doubt be raised legitimately when we debate the Select Committee's report.

Primary Roads (Edinburgh)

11.21 am

Question again proposed, That this House do now adjourn.

Mr. Speaker: Since time has been taken out of this debate, perhaps the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) will take 10 minutes less for his Adjournment and will split the time with the hon. Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson), who has the following Adjournment debate.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I am grateful to you for that guidance, Mr. Speaker.

I welcome this opportunity to discuss in detail the Government's proposals for primary roads south of Edinburgh. I wish to make it clear at the outset that, in my view, the consultation process in which the Government engaged, through the Scottish Office and the roads directorate, to get as open and extensive a debate as possible on the consultation document published last October was also welcome. It was a positive exercise, with the number of responses, at more than 200, providing constructive and helpful contributions. It has been a useful way to proceed when such important decisions are being taken. Therefore, I have no quibble with the process that led to the recent Government announcements and conclusions following the study.

The report having drawn extensively on responses from the general public, the Government's position has now been made clear. The purpose of this debate is to probe further the intentions of the roads directorate and Government policy in general. Clarification is needed of some of the consequences of the decisions that have been announced, and in this debate it may be helpful for me to cite some of the views of my constituents.

There were three main subject areas of the consultation process on the routes south of Edinburgh, and they are laid out in order in the Government's response. The first was the question of access to border towns; the second, the question of the future improvement of the A1 between Edinburgh and Newcastle; and the third, the new Government proposals for the M74 and M8 fast link and the prospective tolls provision for the building of that new road.

The conclusions of the report are good so far as they go, but, certainly in relation to my constituency, they do not go far enough. The provision is adequate for access to the border area but not for travellers southwards from the principal border towns. In other words, the northern section of the region will be properly served as a result of the announcements contained in the document, but not the southern half of the region.

I accept that there is never enough money, particularly for projects like roads and capital infrastructure investment. I also accept that there are equally strong competing claims from other regions, and the debate on transport in the Scottish Grand Committee illustrated that, for the Minister was bombarded on all sides by constituency claims from hon. Members.

Nor do I believe that every trunk route can be brought up to either dual carriageway or motorway standard. But there is an argument for claiming that the planning period covered by the study is extremely long. It will last for 15 or perhaps 20 years and during that time many far-reaching changes will take place in society as a whole and in the areas to be served by the new roads. For example, there are bound to be great changes in the development of tourism, which is crucial to the future of the border area.

The provision being made in the Government's plans is not adequate for the planned routes south of the border region over the time scale about which we are speaking, and there are two particularly important aspects of that in my constituency. The first is the provision being made for the A1 south of Dunbar and the second is the provision being made southwards from Hawick to Carlisle.

Concerning the A1, I pay tribute to the members of the all-party campaign, the hon. Member for Wansbeck (Mr. Thompson), my hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), and in particular the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson), who co-ordinated the all-party campaign which produced an excellent document which argued for the upgrading of the A1. It was entitled, "The A1—A Case for the Improvement to Dual Carriageway Standard between Newcastle and Edinburgh". Those hon. Members would have been in their places today to support the case I am making had they not had other important constituency engagements.

That campaign, which also involved the Minister's opposite number south of the border, from the Department of Transport, and key officials from, and members of, the local roads authorities involved, represented a worthwhile exercise and served to inform the debate that led to the Government's conclusions. Unfortunately, not all the arguments contained in it have been adequately taken into account.

The Minister should this morning say as much as possible about future provision in prospect for the A1 south of Dunbar, and, particularly for the purpose of this debate, the provision in the county of Berwickshire. I do not have time to rehearse all the arguments that have been made for the upgrading of the A1. The accident rate on the road is much too high and is a constant source of concern in my constituency. There are limited overtaking opportunities and drivers overtake on single carriageway stretches where the provision is extremely substandard.

There is increasing worry about the high volume of heavy goods traffic using the road, and positive recognition that it is a better all-weather route, with the road being kept open during the winter months. There is a strong case to be made for improving the road to improve journey times, and there is every reason to improve it to dual carriageway standard to avoid some of the difficulties that are occurring with the mixture of local, particularly agricultural, traffic with the through trunk road traffic that also uses the road.

On page 6 of the Government response, concerning their policy for the A1 between Newcastle and Edinburgh, it is said that it is their

"general policy to provide sections of improved road to allow safe overtaking opportunities and to improve road safety."

What does that mean? They also say that

"dual carriageway is not ruled out in the very long term."

Local people are wondering how long the "very long" is likely to be. There is strong feeling locally that rural sections of trunk routes should not be prejudiced simply because they travel through rural areas. A trunk route is a trunk route, whether it passes through arable countryside, or passes through or bypasses towns and villages as it makes its way south or north.

[Mr. Archy Kirkwood]

I want to ask, first, what the time scale is for improvements to the dualling of the A1 road south of Dunbar.

Second, has the Scottish Development Department made plans to make the A1 road on the northern side of the English border adequate to cope with the planned dualling of the road on the south, the English, side of the border? There is much local concern that the higher grade of road on the English side of the boundary will disgorge traffic at a high rate on to an inadequate section of the A1 on the southern side of the border. That will have safety implications in the future if something is not done about it in the short term.

Finally, when can we expect details of the work of the steering committee, which I am pleased the Government readily accepted when it was suggested by the all-party group that considered the future provision for the A1? When can we expect details to be announced about when the committee will start work, and what its detailed remit and the time scale for its work will be? We in the eastern side of the county of Berwickshire look with some envy at the excellent work that has been done on the A96 Inverness to Aberdeen road, and some of the route action studies that have been so successful in improving that road. I hope that similar criteria will be applied to the A1.

Page 8 of the report gives the Government's proposals for the A7 south of Hawick. It states:

"South of Hawick, improvements to the A7 will continue to be made to achieve specific local objectives, however. These will include a programme of accident remedial schemes and smaller improvement schemes where appropriate."

Will the Minister spell out exactly what that all adds up to? As he will know, Hawick is by far the biggest border constituency, and certainly the biggest community in my constituency. The Borders and that section of the Border community relates to communities in the south just as much, if not more than, to those in the north. Work is being done to develop Carlisle, south of Hawick, as a key road and rail junction. When one considers the prospect for the new European markets that will open in 1992 and all the aspects of the Borders' commerce and industry including textiles, electronics and tourism, it is obvious that there will be greater traffic flows in the period covered by the report.

There are no alternative rail links available to us. It is 20 years since the Waveley route was withdrawn from the Borders region, and the area has been suffering severely from lack of adequate transport provision ever since. There are psychological as well as social, commercial and tourist justifications for having a proper road south of Hawick, between Hawick and Carlisle. If the Government's plans are successful—I hope that they are—in dualling the A7 to Galashiels and improving the Galashiels to Hawick link, they will provide even more traffic to be served by a totally inadequate road south from Hawick. That problem will not go away, but will get worse before it gets better. It would be helpful if we could have some idea of the Government's plans to produce an improved standard of road for that stretch in the next 10 to 15 years.

I shall concentrate on the A7 south of Hawick at four different levels. I assume that there is no question but that the maintenance and repair of that stretch of road will continue to be adequate. May we have an assurance about that? Secondly, it would be helpful if the Minister could clarify what can be achieved by route action plans. I have already referred to the significant improvements made to the A96. I accept that significant improvements can be made, but what do they add up to? I understand that, perfectly properly, the Government are trying to reduce accidents by up to a third by the year 2000, and I support that because it is welcome. I also understand that some new money—not a large amount in the global totality of capital expenditure on roads—is available. How much of that money can we expect to be devoted to the A7 south of Hawick?

Thirdly, I understand that the local authority has identified half a dozen or so proposals for improvement schemes that would all come with a price tag of less than £1 million for each individual project. If carried out over a reasonable period—put into the planning process over the next five years—they would make a significant improvement to overtaking opportunities on the A7 south of Hawick. That would be just about adequate to cope with the road's present needs.

At the higher level there are two major road work schemes that would cost more than £1 million, although not much more. The Borders roads authority has identified them on the stretch of road from Hawick to the Dumfries boundary. If they could be brought into the planning process during a five-year period, they would bring the road up to a state at which it could be argued that it was beginning to be adequate to cope with the needs of the local community.

I know that the trunk and key principal road network review that the Government are undertaking for the road network in central Scotland will compete with some of the claims and requests that I am making this morning. However, according to the study, the total motorway budget is £650 million, so the amount of money that I am asking for is not extravagant in terms of the whole budget.

There is a degree of confusion about whether the Minister is coming to see us and, if he is, who he is coming to see. He kindly wrote to me about that, and an answer will clarify some of the confusion. If he comes—I hope that he does—I hope that he will not ignore either the roads authority or me. I recognise that there is a particular head of steam among the public in the town about the state of the A7 south of Hawick. It would be good if the Minister were prepared to come and expose himself to public opinion. If he is willing to come and discuss these important matters, I am sure that he would not dream of doing so without taking the roads authority and the sitting Members of Parliament into account.

As a result of the trunk road that goes straight through the centre of Hawick, there is internal traffic chaos at present that is building up unacceptably in the town. There are now real problems. I fully understand that some are claiming that we should have a bypass, but my information is that a bypass would take only 10 per cent. of the through traffic away from the town and so it will, by itself, not be a long-term solution. The only long-term solution would be internal new traffic arrangements with single flows in both the north and south directions to separate the trunk route traffic. In addition, the River Teviot will have to be crossed again by another bridge in order to rationalise the internal traffic congestion that is building up.

I hope that the Minister will not leave the local roads authority to rely on its section 94 consent but will

substantially assist it with any major capital schemes to try to resolve some of the problems in Hawick. It would be helpful if he could say something about the time scale that will be used to deal with that problem. If we could have some reaction to the work that the local authority has done on the congestion, it would go a long way to alleviating some of the evident anxieties in the town.

As one of the principal users of trunk routes south of Edinburgh is the Lowland-Scottish Bus Group and there is a great deal of expectancy, anticipation and concern about the group's disposal in the near future, I hope that the Minister, if he has time, will say when we may expect a Government decision on that important matter.

11.39 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): I should tell the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) that the proposals for Lowland-Scottish are now being considered and we hope that a decision will soon be made. We are aware of the interest in that subject. I thank the hon. Gentleman for his welcome for the consultation about routes south of Edinburgh. This is a worthwhile debate and I am keenly aware of the interest in the matter shown by the hon. Gentleman and by other hon. Members.

As I said in April, our consultation about routes south of Edinburgh was a successful exercise. There were more than 220 responses covering a wide range of interests. I announced at that time our response to the views that were presented and our decisions on the way ahead. Those will result in a package of major road improvements likely to cost upwards of £140 million which will complement and enhance the existing roads programmes.

We have set in hand the A1 past Dunglass improvement scheme which provides a bypass to Cockburnspath and quality overtaking opportunities. That work will begin in the summer. Secondly, we have announced plans and proposals for dualling sections of that route. I have announced that consultants will be appointed as soon as possible to start preparing a dualling scheme to Haddington bypassing Glasgow, and they will carry out detailed evaluation of further dualling in due course to Dunbar. It is envisaged that the dualling will initially terminate near Haddington, but that will be the subject of a feasibility study and safety will be taken into account.

A natural break point in traffic levels will be an appropriate point for the dualling to start. It is too early to comment on phasing of the further dualling past Haddington and onwards to Dunbar, but it may be possible to undertake the rolling programme for this work and it is likely that the same group of consultants will be used.

The hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) also expressed interest in this matter, and I shall deal quickly with the points that he made about heavy commercial traffic using the route to east coast ports. Our study considered all types of traffic using the route and concluded that dualling the whole road would not attract enough traffic to justify the high cost. The joint working group will lead local authorities to monitor the situation, and we shall also press on with the dualling to Haddington and with improvements east of Haddington.

Generally, we need and are developing an improvement strategy for the more likely traffic route south of Dunbar. Detailed plans will be prepared as quickly as possible on the dualling to Haddington. Consultants will be commissioned to prepare dualling plans as far as Dunbar and will consider phasing the work. It is certainly possible that the dual bypass of Haddington could follow at a fairly early stage and perhaps as a direct follow-up to the dualling up to the town.

I was asked about the planning timetable. The economic appraisal of road schemes looks forward over 30 years. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire asked about the time scale for improvements. I am glad that he recognised that we are looking 15 to 20 years ahead and fully appreciated that there will be changes in traffic levels and society over that time. Our consultants for the main study looked at traffic levels, but the A1 steering group will continue to monitor traffic and councils, and other consultants who are looking at the A7 will also take a wide and long-term view.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the steering group. It will monitor traffic and, more immediately, will identify accident remedial and overtaking opportunity schemes. The time scale for accident remedial schemes can be rapid or immediate and there should be no delay in implementation. Other schemes may take longer to prepare, but I hope for early action in relation to overtaking.

The stretch of road which crosses the border will soon be considered by the steering group with a view to a possible joint dualling scheme in conjunction with the Department of Transport. I take the hon. Gentleman's point that there would be no sense in having a dual carriageway that suddenly stopped at what in road terms is an artificial border. He asked about A7 schemes that had been identified by regional councils. All possible schemes identified by councils or other parties will certainly be considered as part of the remit given for further study of proposals for the A7 south of Hawick. I agree that a single high quality carriageway is fully justified. The Tower to Dunbar scheme is an important step towards this, and in both England and Scotland the general policy for the A1 between Newcastle and Edinburgh is to provide sections of improved road to allow safe overtaking opportunities and improve road safety.

Work is now under way on the A96 Inverness to Aberdeen trunk road to develop techniques to identify effective sets of schemes which, taken together, prevent the build up of long platoons of traffic. That will be done by providing the necessary overtaking opportunities where they are needed and are most economic to provide.

It may be possible to take advantage of these new techniques to provide a similar improvement package for the A1. The hon. Gentleman is correct about that. That is why, following discussions with the hon. Members for Roxburgh and Berwickshire, for East Lothian, for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) and for Wansbeck (Mr. Thompson), I announced that a steering group with representatives from local and central Government from north and south of the border will be formed to monitor traffic growth on the A1 and to develop a suitable programme of improvements. That has rightly been welcomed. Terms of reference are currently being drafted and will be considered at the first meeting of the group which it is expected will take place on 21 June. Invitations will shortly be sent out to the participating roads authorities.

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

The package of improvements that are planned for the A1 is likely to cost about £50 million and will provide substantial benefits to road users. The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire will be interested to know whether the steering group will include elected members. It will primarily be a technical working group and will therefore be at official level, but I am sure that regular reports will be made to elected representatives and of course we can always have meetings with elected representatives as and when they are required.

I shall now deal with the proposals for the Borders. The most important immediate improvements will be to the A68 Dalkeith bypass for which draft orders will be published in June. More generally, traffic volumes clearly show that the greatest need for the Borders is quality access to the capital. Such access would be greatly improved by our proposal to dual the A7 between Edinburgh and Galashiels. We shall appoint consultants to investigate possible alignments for this improvement and they will take full account of the environmental issues that are involved. The consultants will also consider the scope for further improvements between Galashiels and Hawick and will define the strategic benefits of an A68-A7 link.

The Borders communities will benefit substantially from our plans for the A68-A7 which are likely to cost at least £100 million. This major improvements programme will be further augmented by the route action plan that we are commissioning for south of Hawick. I am confident that this package of measures, which was formulated in the light of responses to our consultation paper, will provide a substantial improvement to the network.

I am aware of the anxiety that the hon. Gentleman expressed in connection with a section of the A7 south of Hawick. That road is important to the local economy, especially to the tourist and textile industries. The possibility of a bypass at Hawick can certainly be considered, but I cannot give a commitment at this stage. To be economically viable, an improved A7 would have to attract traffic from the M74, and, as motorways are the safest category of road, the consultants' study predicted a reduction in road safety. Money to fund the improvements cannot be diverted from the A74 project without economic and environmental penalties.

Constructing a three-lane M74 allows Scotland's main artery, the A74, to be kept fully open during the decade of construction. It also allows much of the new road to be constructed on line, thereby reducing severance and adverse environmental impacts on local communities and the surrounding countryside. For south of Hawick, improvements to the A7 will continue to be made to achieve specific local objectives. I have announced our intention to commission regional councils to design a route action plan. That will involve accident remedial schemes and smaller improvement schemes, especially for improving overtaking opportunities as and where appropriate. Langholm bypass is already in the traffic road programme and the required preparatory work and statutory procedures are under way. My hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) made strong representations about the A7. He is very much involved because it runs through his constituency.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire may be assured that any proposals already identified by regional councils or others will be considered as a matter of course. I said in April that improvements from Galashiels to Hawick would together cost up to £20 million and that still more would be spent south of Hawick. That will bring substantial benefits and ensure that any traffic coming off the future dual carriageway at Galashiels will find a continuing high standard road on which it can travel safely.

The remit to the councils will also specifically include Hawick, where it is clear that some early improvements are required for trunk road traffic through the town itself. Consideration will be given to suitable traffic management measures in the town to provide more satisfactory arrangements for both through traffic and local people. The most advanced traffic signals are already located in the town of Hawick. They are the only signals of their sort currently in operation in Scotland. Our proposals for the Borders are expected to cost upwards of £100 million and will provide significant long-term benefits to the whole area. It is obviously necessary to introduce remedial action programmes for safety reasons.

It has been confirmed that the M74 fast link is a potentially useful addition to the Scottish road network. With a substantially increased public investment in motorways and trunk roads, especially in central and southern Scotland, resources for the project cannot be found in the foreseeable future without a significant impact on other schemes. It is intended further to examine the feasibility of introducing private finance. We have commissioned management consultants to hold detailed discussions with the many private sector interests that have indicated that they may wish to pursue the option of a privately funded fast link.

The proposals outlined in our route south of Edinburgh study are clear evidence of our substantial commitment to the improvement of the road network in south-east Scotland. I have already dealt with the hon. Gentleman's point about the dual carriageway stopping at the border and I have made our position clear. On the question of road improvements south of Dunbar and the costs involved, we must first assess need. The new steering group will advise us on the needs and the priorities. Of course, the Borders need access by a good A7 to the M6 and the motorway network. I agree that the A7 from Hawick to the border should be a good quality single carriageway and the remit to the consultants will reflect that. The consultants will also take full account of the need for a smooth transition over a safe, high-quality single carriageway south of Hawick.

I have already referred to our plans for Hawick. A bypass would be unlikely to bring the town a great deal of relief from traffic, and because of the surrounding hills it would be very expensive. It is likely that we will concentrate on traffic management measures, but I shall look to the regional councils for their advice on that matter.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): On a point of order——

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have another two minutes. That is what Mr. Speaker said.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: My understanding is that Mr. Speaker asked the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) to reduce his speech by 10 minutes. I have now lost 10 minutes of my speech.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Order. The Minister has until 11.55 am.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: That was my clear understanding of Mr. Speaker's request. I should not dream of taking a single second from the next debate.

Safety on all trunk roads is of absolute priority. We intend route action programmes for remedial schemes to be prepared as quickly as possible and to be implemented without delay. Our proposals show that we have a strong commitment.

A trunk and key principal road network review for Scotland has been going on for some time. It is essential that the increased funds that we are providing are directed to the right places. The study is expected to be completed in about a year's time and we shall examine all the relevant issues.

The hon. Gentleman asked me about a meeting with Members of Parliament and those locally elected. The chief executive has contacted Mrs. Findlay-Maxwell and an approach has been made to me on behalf of the council and the elected members and the proper procedures will be followed. I look forward to suitable arrangements being made in due course. I thank the hon. Gentleman for raising these relevant and important matters.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. In a speech in the House on Tuesday evening I mentioned the firm of Taylor Woodrow, with which I have a small professional interest which is registered in the Register of Members' Interests, and omitted to mention that interest before I made my speech. I am sorry about that. It was a complete oversight and I apologise.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Thank you. The hon. Gentleman has made his point, but it provides an opportunity for me to remind all hon. Members that during debates it is now a rule of the House—not a convention, as was previously the case—for every hon. Member to declare any relevant pecuniary interest or benefit of whatever nature, whether direct or indirect, that he may have had, may have or may be expecting to have. It is wise for hon. Members to declare that interest at the beginning of a speech.

Kidney Patients

11.56 am

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): I am grateful for the opportunity to initiate an Adjournment debate to air some of the problems facing kidney patients—that is, those suffering from end-stage renal failure who are either on dialysis or awaiting a transplant.

First, I must declare an interest: I am a kidney patient on haemo-dialysis which I receive at home, and I am president of the National Federation of Kidney Patients Associations.

Kidney disease is the fifth most prevalent and fatal illness in Britain, but, with the advent of an ever-increasing number of haemo-dialysis machines and the introduction of continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis, it is no longer the killer disease that it once was. With successful transplantation, it is an illness which can be almost completely overcome. The United Kingdom used to lag behind many European countries in the number of patients receiving dialysis, but my most recent figure of 55 patients per million of the population receiving treatment bears favourable comparison with many of our neighbours, even if we still have a fair way to go to catch up with the Federal Republic of West Germany and Switzerland in the number of patients receiving dialysis per million of the population.

But I understand that those needing dialysis are increasing at the rate of 500 patients per year and that probably between 80 and 100 patients per million now require renal support, although, sadly, many of them do not get it. Kidney transplantation has been on a steadily rising trend since 1983 and has almost doubled during the past 10 years. All that says much for the Department of Health and the regional and district health authorities which have accepted renal replacement therapy as a form of treatment which should be available for all who need it. A dialysis machine manufacturer recently told me that demand for his equipment had fallen back to a fairly steady figure of about 300 machines a year from the time when two of three times that number were being ordered.

What matters now is to update the older machines and encourage the creation of small, more localised, minimum care dialysis units so that kidney patients will not need to be bussed long distances to a general hospital with a dialysis ward. As I suggested during the debate on the National Health Service and Community Care Bill, money going with the patient may have a beneficial effect in that direction, particularly when districts realise how much they are spending on kidney dialysis in regional hospitals.

Continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis has made huge strides and is running neck and neck with haemo-dialysis in the number of patients using it. CAPD allows the kidney patient to be free of machines and to live at home. Home-based haemodialysis machines achieve almost the same result, except that the patient must have a carer in attendance, or at least in earshot, all the time while he or she spends four to six hours hooked up to the machine. However, home-based dialysis, like CAPD, takes the pressure off hospital dialysis units and gives patients much greater freedom.

As my hon. Friend the Minister knows, dialysis requires the placing of two needles in one of the patient's arms, from which blood is drawn into the dialysis machine, cleaned by the dialyser, and then returned to the body. The

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arm being used for that purpose cannot be moved, so if the machine alarms, the helper must put matters right—as she does in linking the patient up to the machine and taking him off it.

A dialysis session lasts between four and six hours, so the attendant has to give up a fair proportion of the day to be available to the patient. All kidney patients on home dialysis receive an attendance allowance of £25. That may be enough if it is the husband or wife who helps, but not if the patient has to engage the services of a carer. My first plea to my hon. Friend the Minister is to discuss with our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security whether more money can be provided. Some charitable funds are available in certain areas to help boost the money available to pay carers, but not everywhere. Few carers will work for much less than £25 per day.

When I first suffered kidney failure, I suffered—as others do—the attendant problems. In particular, I suffered from acute anaemia, as what was left of my kidneys was failing to secrete the substance that creates haemoglobin, except at a very low level—rather less than 50 per cent. of normal. I had the characteristic yellow-white face of the anaemic renal patient, and I was aware of my acute lack of energy and a loss of general well-being.

In 1988, my consultant asked whether I would be willing to be a guinea pig in clinical trials of what is in effect a wonder drug called erythropoetin, which aims to replicate the secretion missing from the kidneys of renal patients—and which could, he assured me, give me back my haemoglobin, my energy, and the colour to my cheeks. I agreed to join the programme, and today I would find it hard to be a kidney patient not in receipt of EPO, as it is known for short.

I am well aware that I am one of the lucky ones. I know that EPO is very expensive, and I know also that some regional health authorities will not allow it to be prescribed to any of their kidney patients because their budgets are already overstretched. But I cannot stay silent. Not every kidney patient needs or would benefit from erythropoetin. My consultant suggests that about 1,500 of the 8,000 patients on dialysis ought to receive it, but in Oxford where I am treated he has funds enough for only 50 per cent. of those who could benefit.

Elsewhere, the story is too often the same, yet I am told by so many, "Yes, we know that it is a wonder drug, that it can offer a dialysis patient a much-improved quality of life, and help him to return to employment—but we do not have the funds to pay for it." That is a heartbreaking message—as tough on the consultant who wants to prescribe EPO as on the patient who knows by hearsay what he or she is missing.

I appeal to my hon. Friend the Minister to re-examine that issue, and I ask him to consider this question: what is the point of creating wonder drugs if, when they have been developed, the medical authorities cannot afford to prescribe them? I know that I will be told that it is for regional health authorities to decide how they spend their budgets, and that it is for them to include or exclude something such as EPO—but surely the Department can earmark part of the money going to regions specifically for meeting the costs of new drugs, or hold back that money unless a region gives details of the drugs on which it is to be spent.

Something must be done as a matter of urgency—or EPO must be licensed and made available on prescription from local general practitioners, even if patients still come under hospital renal consultants. I am aware that the Department of Health quite rightly believes that successful transplantation is a better and less expensive treatment than dialysis, but it has to be accepted that not everyone can have a successful transplant. While there is a shortage of organs for transplantation, dialysis is the only remedy.

Naturally, that brings me to the subject of the transplant programme and the supply of organs. More organs are needed. We should applaud the increasing number of transplants that have taken place in the past six years, and the efforts that have been made to improve supply, but one cannot escape the ethical questions involved in transplanting pieces of the human body. Transplantation in my opinion is acceptable only when the organ is a voluntary gift from one family to another. To that extent, I am opposed to opting-out schemes, which mean that if one does not state that one's organs are not to be taken they can be plundered, whether the next of kin like it or not. However, I welcome every initiative to improve the supply of organs.

The audit carried out under the auspices of the Medical Research Council last year gave us a much clearer picture of how many potential donors arise in intensive therapy units. It came up with a figure of 1,700, which is roughly half the old estimate, and that clarifies how much more needs to be done.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman)—who was the Under-Secretary of State for Health—who organised a seminar last November, given by the Department, on the subject of the donor scheme and the constructive suggestions that came out of that meeting.

I wish to dwell on one idea—that of enhancing the kidney donor card scheme, or perhaps I should have said the organ donor card. The scheme could be more successful. The idea of a donor card is excellent. If one wants to give an organ, one carries a card to say so, and if anything happens, the card is there for the hospital staff to see and to act upon. It sounds so simple. However, the chance of the card going into the intensive therapy unit with the casualty is extremely slight, as the first thing that happens is that clothes are taken away before anyone is taken into the unit. Staff in the unit will not spend a great deal of time searching through possessions to see if the patients have a donor card, as they are concerned with saving life.

A consultant asked me to question the Department about how many times the donor card produced organs for transplantation. It was unable to give me an answer. That speaks volumes about the fact that the card is not working as we would wish.

Even if staff in the intensive therapy unit find the card, they only act upon it to the extent that they will then telephone next of kin to ask for permission to take organs. They do not only ask next of kin: they will almost certainly ask the husband or wife and other close members of the family. If anyone objects, the organs will not be taken. That seems to fly in the face of what the donor card system is meant to achieve. While there is no legal requirement for anyone to be consulted if the card is signed by the donor,

I understand that the medical profession believes it has a duty to obtain family consent, or at least the consent of the next of kin, before taking organs, and I do not wish to argue with that.

That does not entirely invalidate the donor card, as it performs another important role. It encourages people to think about and to accept organ donation as part of everyday life, and it has been valuable. It is true also that too many card carriers have not told their families that they carry cards and therefore that they wish to donate their organs. I suggest to my hon. Friend the new slogan "Carry the card and tell your family."

If the card is not accepted by the medical profession as having the same legal imperative as a person's will—clearly, removing organs is of a different order from leaving goods and chattels—perhaps the solution lies in the donor card being countersigned by the next of kin. It would then be unnecessary for the transplant co-ordinator to telephone the next of kin, and it would mean an end to the emotional trauma that follows the death of a loved one, when those being asked whether organs may be taken are in the wrong frame of mind to consent. That so many people consent speaks volumes for the skill and diplomacy of transplant co-ordinators who are currently at work.

I go one stage further. I want my hon. Friend the Minister to consider the schemes in Wales and Derbyshire —Lifeline Wales and Lifeline Derbyshire; I believe that there is a similar scheme in Glasgow—whereby the names of all those carrying donor cards are stored on computers that are available to intensive therapy units. The name, address and age of a donor is placed on the computer register. Of course, if I have my way, the request to be a donor will have been made known to the next of kin. That system works in Wales. Lifeline Wales has a donation rate of 20 donors per million of population—the best in the country. There are more than 300,000 on the computer register, with a further 400 being signed up every week. The computer is connected to all intensive care units in Wales.

Lifeline Derbyshire is similar, except that it works on a computer at Manchester university, with a terminal situated in the Chesterfield royal hospital, and is connected to local hospitals in which there are intensive therapy units. Lifeline Derbyshire has produced a modified donor card, on which is added a form on which the information to be put on to the computer can be added. I understand that, like Lifeline Wales, Lifeline Derbyshire is proving to be effective.

Using either example, it is clear to me that putting the names of organ donors on computer is the way to make the donor card a real success. I have given my own opinion about the countersignature by the next of kin, because people responsible for Lifeline Wales agreed that that procedure would help. However, I ask my hon. Friend the Minister carefully to consider this procedure, even if it is only the donor's name which is put on the computer and the next of kin still telephoned.

I know that there are resource implications in the proposal but, if it was possible to put the names of people wishing to give organs—all those currently carrying donor cards; I am speaking not only about kidney donors but about all those who wish to give organs—on a national computer held by the United Kingdom transplant service or on regional computers held by the various regional health authorities connected to intensive therapy units, we might increase the number of organ donors, in line with the Welsh and Derbyshire experience. In turn, we might increase the supply of organs that are so desperately needed at this time.

I do not need to tell my hon. Friend the Minister that successful kidney transplants are a much more economical way of overcoming end-stage renal failure than dialysis or dialysis coupled with the use of erythropeotin. I therefore commend the idea to him.

12.14 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Sir M. McNair-Wilson) on securing this debate on an issue of great importance not only to him, but to the whole community. I appreciate the irony that my arrival at the Department of Health was prompted by the departure from Government of my right hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker), with whom my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury and I share a link. I followed my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury as parliamentary private secretary to our right hon. Friend. My hon. Friend set a high standard which I sought to emulate—incompletely, I suspect.

It is a great pleasure to respond to the Adjournment debate initiated by my hon. Friend. Today, as always, his speech has demonstrated the depth of his experience and his understanding of the problems associated with the treatment of kidney patients within the National Health Service.

It is important to set the issues my hon. Friend raised within the context of the NHS treatment of kidney patients, which is one of the great success stories of recent years. The increase in the number of patients whose lives have been extended by renal care since 1979 has been considerable, both for patients on various forms of dialysis and for patients who have benefited from transplants. Both groups have increased substantially. In 1979, there were just over 6,000 patients whose lives had been extended by renal care. That figure has now risen to more than 16,000 patients whose lives have been saved by the NHS because of advances in renal medicine. That is a great success story, of which everyone associated with the NHS has every reason to be proud.

It is also important to say that we are not complacent about the future development of this aspect of care within the NHS. My hon. Friend mentioned the work sponsored by the Renal Association, which shows the scale of need for renal care in the community. The study suggests that we need to increase the number of new patients coming into renal support above the level already achieved, based on epidemiological research.

The Renal Association came to see me last week to talk about that and I complimented the association on the quality of its research, which I believe to be soundly based and to be an object lesson, from which I hope that others will learn, on how the new health authorities after the Health Service reforms next April should discharge their responsibilities for seeking to measure need and to establish the level of need for different types of care in the NHS. In that way, as in many others, those involved in the care of kidney patients have led the way.

My hon. Friend began by arguing the case for an extension of local dialysis units and he suggested that it might be a more appropriate way to treat kidney dialysis patients than to encourage them to come into large centres

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in hospitals. Ultimately, that is a matter for each health authority to decide according to the available resources and circumstances in its own area. That issue will certainly present itself in a new and acute form after next April, when the health authorities will be established as purchasing agents on behalf of kidney patients and they will seek to ensure that the treatment available to patients is the most appropriate for those patients. It is wholly possible that that development will occur after next April.

That change will impact to a degree on my hon. Friend's first request about the extension of attendance allowance payments to those who need carers to assist in the dialysis process at home. I understand my hon. Friend's argument, but have just one reservation about it. Other issues may argue against the provision of dialysis at home for patients who, in the normal course of events, live alone. My hon. Friend may well have suggested an alternative way forward when he referred to the need for local dialysis units rather than for assistance to be given for dialysis at home in the form of more generous attendance allowance payments. I simply enter that reservation.

However, that is ultimately a matter for the Department of Social Security, which, in these new enlightened days, has been split from the Department of Health. I shall therefore communicate with my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Social Security, who is just down the corridor from me, but in another Department. I shall write to my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury when my hon. Friend and I have had the chance to consider his suggestion in more detail.

The second of my hon. Friend's substantial points related to the future of the wonder drug which I shall call EPO, because, unlike my hon. Friend, I have not learnt to pronounce its name in full. I am very much aware of the tremendous advance that that drug represents for renal medicine and of the need to ensure that we can find a way to make it available to kidney patients just as, over the past 15 years, we have made available to kidney patients all the other advances that have been made, many of which are much more expensive than EPO. We must find a way of making certain that the drug is available to the patients who need it. There is no division between my hon. Friend and I on that point.

However, I am afraid that I do not accept my hon. Friend's suggestion that the way to achieve that is through some form of central funding of the local authority's need for that drug. Ultimately, central funding can be achieved only by top-slicing the money—to use the jargon of the Department of Health—that is provided by us to the regions, and from the regions to the districts.

In other words, if the Department of Health funds something centrally, less money is available for the regions and the districts to spend on their own account. That happens from time to time, but in my view it should happen only for the purpose of concentrating resources in areas where there might be some regional disparities. If, as is the case for kidney patients, facilities are spread fairly evenly across the country, there seems little point in top-slicing the budget of, for example, the Northern regional health authority simply to return to that health authority a roughly equivalent amount of money that will allow it to purchase the drug or any other form of treatment.

Therefore, I do not think that top slicing and central funding, which are two sides of the same coin, would advance the argument very far. However, I undertake to seek to work with the regions and the health authorities to ensure that, as far as possible, that drug is available. Following my meeting last week with the Renal Association, I have already asked to be given the up-to-date position about the availability of the drug, region by region. It is important that each region carefully assesses the clinical need for the drug within its own facilities and makes the appropriate plans to ensure that that need is met. That is the way forward, rather than attempting to centralise control at Richmond house.

Sir Michael McNair-Wilson: Perhaps my hon. Friend is not aware that a kidney patient who receives erythropoetin can go back to work. If a person with a manual job suffers kidney failure, he cannot normally work, but that is not the case for someone receiving erythropoetin. If the patient goes back to work, he starts to pay taxes and those taxes go into a central pool. My hon. Friend is right to talk about top-slicing that which would otherwise go to the region in total, but I am suggesting that, through erythropoetin, the Treasury might gain more money than my hon. Friend would be giving the regions. Perhaps that additional money could be considered to be part of the grant funding.

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend, as always, advances a seductive argument. Unfortunately, it is one that he must ultimately address not to me but to my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. We have to work on the basis that the budget available to the NHS is fixed and is part of the public expenditure survey round. I am sure that there is no division between me and my hon. Friend about the enormous advance that EPO represents and the desirability of making it available. It is simply a question of mechanics and how that can be done. The correct way is to seek to work with the regions to eliminate any blockages in the system. I should add that that is another example of a blockage in the NHS management system. We shall seek to eliminate such blockages through the reforms that will be introduced next April.

As soon as we establish more clearly the principle that money should follow patients and that money should be directed to where patients need to be treated, problems which currently seem to represent substantial bureaucratic logjams suddenly seem simpler to resolve.

My hon. Friend's third point was about transplants. I accept the principle that he espoused, that it is preferable, both from a clinical and a financial view, to treat a patient ultimately by a transplant rather than on dialysis. I agree entirely with what my hon. Friend said against moving to a system of opting out of donorship. I do not believe that that represents the way forward.

Various options should be considered to encourage voluntary donorship of organs. I sought to do that at breakfast time this morning. I had been asked to attend the launch of a new balloon that is sponsored by two drug companies—Sandoz and Du Pont—to draw attention to the donor card system. On the way to the launch I made certain that I had my donor card with me because I was conscious that there was a risk——

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle (Lincoln): I am glad that my hon. Friend survived.

Mr. Dorrell: I am, too. I wondered whether I would survive when the balloon collapsed on top of me. I thought that it was perhaps a new way of promoting transplants. The balloon is a serious attempt to attract media interest in the donor card system. I welcome that, and will do everything that I can to support it.

My hon. Friend correctly drew attention to the enormously valuable work of my predecessor on organ donorship. If I can do as well as he did to promote the cause, I shall be pleased.

My hon. Friend also mentioned some of the disadvantages of donor cards and suggested ways in which the system could be enhanced. In particular, he suggested that the card should be countersigned by the next of kin to avoid the problem of medical ethics that doctors are unwilling to use organs simply on the basis of a signed donor card. I should not like to become involved in medical ethics. They are not properly the province of politicians. However, I take note of my hon. Friend's point. Perhaps he would like to take up the matter with the appropriate medical authorities. When politicians start to advise doctors on ethical values, I suspect that we are getting into relatively deep water.

My hon. Friend argued the case for a central computerised register, a cause which he has espoused before and for which he is well known to be an enthusiast. We are not opposed to that idea, but, in view of the practical problems, the Government should not commit taxpayers' money to a central register unless there is clear evidence from the local schemes to which my hon. Friend referred that a register would be a cost-effective way of increasing the availability of organs for transplant. That was the conclusion reached by the working party chaired by Sir Raymond Hoffenberg which reported to us in 1987. We have implemented its main recommendations.

I am aware of the scheme in Wales to which my hon. Friend referred. I suspect that there are other factors in the Welsh experience in addition to the register which contribute to accounting for the improved donorship record there. Indeed, the previous Secretary of State for Wales may have played a part in that; I do not know. We are looking at the Welsh experience and the experience in Birmingham. Although I have not been informed that we are looking at the scheme in Derby, we shall do so.

We recognise the complexity of organ donation and accept the conclusion of the Hoffenberg working party that there is unlikely to be a simple answer to the shortage of organs. There is no panacea, but I hope that we have begun to pinpoint the real issues. As many of them are medical questions, the royal colleges have agreed to take them forward and we shall await the outcome of their deliberations with considerable interest.

ROYAL ASSENT

Madam Deputy Speaker (Miss Betty Boothroyd): Before I call the next hon. Member, I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified Her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

1. Pensions (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1990.
2. Town and Country Planning Act 1990.
3. Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas Act 1990.
4. Planning (Hazardous Substances) Act 1990.
5. Planning (Consequential Provisions) Act 1990.

Telephone Tapping

12.30 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): You will recall, Madam Deputy Speaker, that in 1985 one of your predecessors announced to the House that the Queen had graciously assented to the passage of the Interception of Communications Act. It was the result of long concern in the House, among the public, and, in particular, among the personnel of British Telecommunications. I am particularly pleased that today's debate is attended by my hon. Friend the Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam), who has a long record of representing the union that organises members within British Telecommunications.

The Act was not forced on the House by public pressure, nor by the unease of British Telecommunications' employees. It was forced on the Government by a decision of the European Court of Human Rights in the Malone judgment. The Act provides the minimum degree of protection and it is deeply flawed in several ways. First, it provides a remedy only to those who are able and choose to complain about their telephone having been tapped. That implies that the person concerned knew of the tap in the first place and of the nature of its operation. In 99 out of 100 cases there is no such knowledge. Moreover, there is no requirement in the Act to inform the subject, either subsequently or during tapping, that the tap is in place.

An amendment moved to the Bill before it was enacted is highly relevant to this Adjournment debate. It would have provided immunity to employees of British Telecom should they choose to report what they believed to be an unauthorised and unlawful tap. The amendment was rejected by the then Government.

Perhaps the biggest flaw of all is that the Act created an interception of communications tribunal to which an aggrieved member of the public could complain. However, the tribunal is limited to investigating only those cases where a warrant has been issued to identify whether a warrant has been properly issued. It has no authority to investigate whether a tap has been placed without a warrant. If the aggrieved complainant has a tap placed without a proper warrant, the tribunal cannot proceed further. It will not notify the aggrieved complainant that his or her telephone has been tapped without a warrant. All that happens is that the complainant receives a response from the tribunal concluding that there has been no contravention of section 5(2) of the Act.

That information can mean one of two things: either that a warrant was properly granted and the tribunal, having examined the matter, has concluded that there was full authority and therefore no contravention of the Act, or that there was no warrant and no authority and the tap was placed unlawfully, but the person receiving that information was none the wiser and did not have the information available for further action.

As a result of the Act at least we have an annual statement from the commissioner of the tribunal who provides a report on the scale of telephone tapping. I have with me the most recent report that provides figures for the warrants issued by the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Scotland in each year since 1985. There is an intriguing feature to those figures in each of those five years as the number of warrants issued in Scotland is far higher pro rata of population than the number issued for England by the Home Secretary. If one made a simple arithmetical calculation based on population—I appreciate that that is a crude approach to a complex subject—the number of warrants issued in Scotland is consistently 50 per cent. higher than the number issued in England. I find that puzzling as I am not aware that Scotland is facing a significantly greater terrorist or subversion threat than the metropolitan areas of England. I would appreciate some guidance from the Minister when he replies about why a consistently larger number of warrants is granted in Scotland than in England.

The great omission from the report is that the figures provided by it relate only to the warrants issued by the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Scotland. They do not cover any warrants or authorisations issued by the Foreign Secretary. That is a critical point as there is a growing belief that most telephone tapping, given the sophisticated nature of electronic communications, is now conducted by GCHQ—not MI5 or special branch—which answers to the Foreign Secretary and therefore obtains its authorisations from the Foreign Office.

Two weeks ago a senior official of the National Communications Union was quoted in *The Guardian* as saying:

> "If there was an independent investigation into the number of taps at any one time, the public would be amazed"

Against that background I want to consider the specific case of my constituent, Mr. T. McSherry. The history of his experience can be briefly told. Mr. McSherry is the acting manager of the telephone exchange in Livingston new town, in my constituency. He experienced a pattern of interference on his home telephone line and, being a technician and the acting manager of the telephone exchange, he reasonably decided to sort out the problem himself. He climbed up a set of stairs and traced his line in the attic of the exchange. I am sure that "attic" is not the proper term, but my hon. Friend the Member for Blaydon will put me right on that.

In a remote corner of the telephone exchange Mr. McSherry found that a device had been placed on his line, which he traced to a connection in Edinburgh. As he is a technician for British Telecom, he is capable of recognising a telephone tap. Just to be certain, however, he summoned two fellow qualified engineers in the exchange to act as witnesses to the existence of the device and to the probable explanation of the device as a tap on his home telephone line.

British Telecom has since responded to that alarming discovery by explaining that the device was one that it had placed on a number of telephone lines at random at the request of Oftel to provide random checks on the precision of the billing mechanism of British Telecom. That device would record all the telephone numbers that were called by that line.

There are, however, a number of problems with that explanation. First, British Telecom initially responded that it had been unaware that the line belonged to one of its employees because the line was in the name of the employee's wife. That is factually incorrect: the line is in the name of Mr. McSherry and the bill is sent to him. Secondly, it is inconceivable that any engineer intending to place such a device on a line to provide a check on the billing and pricing mechanism on that line would climb to the top of the exchange, go round the back of the display unit and place the device in a hidden corner of the exchange. Any engineer placing a number of such devices

on a random basis will put them in places of the greatest convenience to him and not in places of the greatest concealment to other workers in the exchange.

The reason why the explanation seems implausible is that Mr. McSherry is the acting manager of the telephone exchange. It seems unlikely that British Telecom has been through an exercise of placing random checks on lines in his telephone exchange without him or anyone else in the exchange being aware of it.

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): I declare my interest as a Member sponsored by the National Communications Union. I have checked the matter about which my hon. Friend is speaking. The device discovered was not of the nature of a device normally used to check meters. The witnesses who checked out the existence of the tap found that it was just that—a tap.

Mr. Cook: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who speaks with great technical qualification. We have, then, a situation in which three employees of British Telecom, all skilled and qualified personnel, recognise a tap placed on a line of an employee of BT.

I have had two full discussions with my constituent seeking to identify whether there is any basis for Mr. McSherry becoming a legitimate target for surveillance, and I must report that I am baffled. Mr. McSherry has no criminal record, he has not the remotest link with any terrorist organisation, he has not been particularly active in his union, and he is not a member of any political organisation or has any history of political activity. I do not, in saying that, concede that had he been a trade union activist or a member of a political party he would have been a legitimate target for suspicion. I merely report that he was not, which makes it even more baffling to understand why anyone in the security services should have regarded him as a legitimate target for surveillance or why he should have become subject to a telephone tap.

I also report—I do so without necessarily endorsing it —that there is a suspicion in some quarters that, as Mr. McSherry at the time was the acting manager of the exchange, there may have been a desire on the part of people in higher quarters of BT to assure themselves of Mr. McSherry's loyalty and soundness before making his appointment and promotion permanent. I am not in a position to take a view on that. But if it is indeed the case that the tap was not placed by the security services nor by BT acting for them, but that BT so acted without warrant, then BT committed a criminal offence, and we should view that with gravity.

I wrote to the Secretary of State—as I am sure the Minister will have been briefed—drawing attention to the situation, and I can report satisfaction to the extent that, within days, the tap was removed from the line. I have subsequently received a reply from the Secretary of State providing me with a leaflet about the interception of communications tribunal, but not much else. I wish to share with the House this critical passage in that letter:

> "If Mr. McSherry believes that his telephone is being unlawfully intercepted, he should report his suspicions to the police. The police cannot, however, investigate questions relating to any interception which may have been authorised by the Secretary of State under section 2 of the Interception of Communications Act 1985. This is a matter for the Interception of Communications Tribunal."

There followed a passage saying that I was being sent a leaflet about that tribunal.

The problem with that response is that at present neither my constituent nor I knows, nor are we informed by the letter, whether the interception was authorised. Moreover, the House will recall from my opening remarks that should we complain to the interception of communications tribunal and it finds that it was not properly authorised, it will not tell us. The tribunal will merely report that it has not found a contravention of section 2 of the Interception of Communications Act 1985.

That begs an interesting problem for my constituent and I. We have evidence that there was a tap, that that tap was witnessed by three people each of whom was qualified to recognise a tap and that there is patent evidence on which one could go to the police and say that an interception took place and that it should be investigated to identify whether there had been a criminal offence. But to go to the police we are first required to know whether the tap was authorised, because, if it was, the police have no role in the matter.

I have sought to raise this matter before in circumstances in which a Minister must reply, and the critical question for which one looks to the Minister for guidance is whether we should properly complain to the police because the tapping was not authorised or properly complain to the tribunal because it was authorised. Even in terms of the Secretary of State's reply, we are entitled to that guidance to know which authority to place our complaint before.

I raise the case partly because I have constituents, both Mr. McSherry and his wife, who have been much distressed by the experience and believe that they have a legitimate grievance. I also have constituents who are fellow employees of Mr. McSherry in the telephone exchange and feel a degree of stress because when one of their colleagues comes under surveillance it brings into question their own relationship with British Telecom. However, it is not just to ventilate the grievances of those constituents that I use the procedure of the Adjournment debate. I do so also to raise the wider issues that arise out of my constituents' history.

If a telephone exchange manager is not safe from being tapped, which member of the public is? If the manager of a telephone exchange, owned and run by British Telecom, cannot obtain satisfactory replies to his inquiries and representations at British Telecom, which member of the public or British Telecom client can? That is why I have raised the matter in the House. I hope that the Minister, who has 15 minutes in which to respond, will be more forthcoming than the Secretary of State has been by letter or British Telecom has been to its employee.

12.46 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): In the course of his remarks the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) asked about the number of Scottish warrants. I cannot comment on the number of Scottish as opposed to English warrants, but the commissioner has attested in his annual report to the fact that all Scottish warrants have been properly issued for the correct purposes.

I listened with great care to what the hon. Gentleman said about the alleged tapping of his constituent's telephone line. I can confirm that the hon. Gentleman wrote to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

State on 3 April this year and received from him a letter outlining the action open to his constituent if he believed that his telephone calls were being unlawfully intercepted.

It has been the convention of successive Governments not to discuss individual cases of alleged interception. I have no intention of departing from that practice today. Therefore, I have no comment on the allegation made by Mr. McSherry, which, in the first instance, is a matter for British Telecom. Thereafter, Mr. McSherry may wish to take account of the advice in the letter of my right hon. and learned Friend to the hon. Member for Livingston to the effect that, if Mr. McSherry believed that his telephone calls were being unlawfully intercepted, he should report his suspicions to the police. The letter of my right hon. and learned Friend also informed the hon. Gentleman that questions relating to any interception that may have been authorised by a Secretary of State under section 2 of the Interception of Communications Act 1985 are matters for the interception of communications tribunal. Therefore, it may be helpful to the House if I explain the provisions of the Act and the protection it affords the individual who believes that he may be the subject of unlawful interception.

It was a Conservative Government who introduced the Interception of Communications Act 1985, which put on a statutory basis for the first time the framework and procedures for the lawful interception of communications. One of the most important aspects of the Act, and one to which Parliament gave particularly close attention, was the need to provide protection for the individual by making unlawful interception a criminal offence. The Act also sought to provide an effective means of redress for any individual in respect of whom a warrant had been improperly issued. I shall deal in more detail with those important points in due course.

The Government believe that the properly controlled interception of communication for certain limited but important purposes is not only justified but essential in the public interest. For example, major criminals, or those engaged in subversive terrorist or espionage activity, should not be free to make use of the postal or telecommunications systems to further their activities with immunity from protection.

If normal methods of investigation are not available, it is right that the means should exist to obtain information about such activities through the interception of communications, as long as this is carried out under clear safeguards and strict controls. Interception has made possible the prevention and detection of serious crime, including major robberies, crimes of violence and, increasingly, drug offences, and has led to the prosecution of those responsible. It has also been vital in the prevention of terrorism and for safeguarding the security of the nation.

The Interception of Communications Act 1985 empowers Secretaries of State to issue warrants for the interception of communications. The postal and telecommunication companies to whom the warrants are addressed are obliged to disclose the contents of the communications covered by the warrants. My right hon. and learned Friend signs warrants in respect of Scotland at the request of the police and Customs and Excise for the purpose of preventing or detecting serious crime and at the request of the police in certain counter terrorist cases. The circumstances in which warrants can be issued, the criteria applied and those to whom the intercepted material can be disclosed are set out in section 2 of the Act.

In relation to warrants that are issued by my right hon. and learned Friend in respect of serious crime, I should perhaps explain that section 10(3) of the Act defines serious crime as conduct which, being an offence, involves the use of violence, or results in substantial financial gain or is conduct by a large number of persons in pursuit of a common criminal purpose, or is an offence for which a person of 21 years or more without previous convictions could reasonably be expected to receive a term of imprisonment of three years or more. For warrants issued in respect of counter terrorism, my right hon. and learned Friend must be satisfied that there is terrorist activity likely to injure the interests of national security. Section 2 of the Act also provides that my right hon. and learned Friend would not consider a warrant necessary unless the information required could not reasonably be obtained by other means.

As I have already said, the Interception of Communications Act provides very clear safeguards and controls and it is important that I should remind the House of these. Under section 1 of the Act it is a criminal offence for any interception of communications in the public telephone and postal systems to take place outside those statutorily provided for by warrant signed by a Secretary of State. This is a key protection for private communications. The interception of communications is a most serious matter and having committed their communications to the public systems members of the public are entitled to expected confidentiality. The improper use of information gained from unlawful interception could have very serious consequences for individuals personally, for their businesses or in other ways. The seriousness of the offence of unlawful interception is reflected in the maximum penalties available. On conviction on indictment an accused could face imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or a fine or both.

Mr. McWilliam: I do not think that any of us takes issue with interception of communications in the context of the crimes that the Minister mentions. In 1983 the Government had a chance to make interception of communications lawful for such crimes but they voted down my amendments to the Telecommunications Bill. Those amendments gave proper redress to citizens who thought that they might be unlawfully tapped. At the present time citizens have no redress.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman tabled amendments when the Telecommunications Bill was being debated. However, in this debate the principle is absolutely clear. It is the normal practice of Ministers neither to confirm nor to deny suggestions that interception has taken place. The courses of action open to people who believe that their telephones have been intercepted are evident. They may either approach the police or complain to the interception of communications tribunal.

Mr. Robin Cook: I should like to pursue that specific point. The Minister is right to say that the Secretary of State has pointed to those two alternatives which are available to my constituent. The problem for my

constituent and me is that the police cannot investigate tapping if it was authorised and the tribunal cannot investigate it if it was not. Before we can follow the Secretary of State's advice, we need to know whether the tap was authorised because, without that information, we do not know to whom we should take our complaint.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman answered his own question in his letter of 3 April, when he wrote to the Secretary of State for Scotland as follows:

"I would myself of course like to know whether a warrant has been issued in this case, but appreciate that you may not be able to confirm or deny the existence of such a warrant."

Questions of interception under the Act involve matters of national security or serious crime. To discuss publicly details of any individual case would risk compromising that system, which I am not prepared to do. However, during the debate I hope that I shall succeed in explaining the safeguards and controls in the system.

The police have a role in investigating complaints made to them about unlawful interception. They cannot, however, investigate questions relating to the propriety of any interceptions that have been authorised by a Secretary of State under section 2 of the Act. For that purpose, the 1985 Act established an independent tribunal to investigate complaints about the improper use of the power of the Secretary of State to issue, renew, modify or cancel warrants. The tribunal president is Mr. Justice Macpherson of Cluny and the other members of the tribunal are senior figures in the legal profession. The tribunal is quite independent of Government. It acts only on receipt of an application and it determines whether there has been a warrant associated with the applicant in the manner specified in the Act, and for that purpose it has full powers to call on any official documents or information that it may need.

If a warrant exists, the tribunal investigates whether there has been any contravention of the Act in relation to it, applying for that purpose the principles of judicial review. If it concludes that there has been a contravention, it must give notice to the applicant of its conclusion and it is required to report its findings to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. I should, however, make it clear that only if it concludes that there has been a contravention does it inform the applicant of the existence of a warrant. The tribunal can also take a number of other steps if it concludes that a contravention has taken place. It can quash the relevant warrant or order the destruction of material intercepted under it and award compensation to the applicant. There is no appeal against the tribunal's decisions.

The Act also provides for the appointment of a commissioner to keep under review the carrying out by the Secretaries of State of their functions under the Act. The Act requires that the commissioner shall be a person who holds or has held high judicial office, and since the commencement of the Act in 1986 that task has been carried out by Lord Justice Lloyd. The commissioner has the task of reviewing the system of authorised interception and has access to those who are engaged in it in order to establish whether the system is being properly conducted.

The commissioner is concerned with both statutory requirements and administrative procedures. He also has a duty to give the tribunal all the assistance it may require. He is therefore able to advise the tribunal, as it may see fit to ask him, on any matters falling within his knowledge that are relevant to the tribunal's functions under the Act. In turn, the tribunal is required to send the commissioner a copy of every report it makes to the Prime Minister in any case where there has been a contravention of the provisions of the legislation falling within his jurisdiction. The Act also requires the commissioner to make ad hoc reports to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister if at any time it appears to him that there has been a contravention of those sections of the Act empowering Secretaries of State to issue warrants which have not been the subject of a report by the tribunal. In addition, the commission is required under the Act to make an annual report to the Prime Minister, as soon as practicable after the end of each calendar year, on the carrying out of his functions. The Prime Minister is required to lay before Parliament a copy of every annual report submitted by the commissioner.

I hope that that explanation demonstrates the seriousness with which the question of interception is dealt with, the explicit safeguards against unlawful interception that are provided for by the 1985 Act and also the remedies for unlawful interception that are available. Hon. Members who wish to assess in detail the operation of the Act may care to refer to Lord Justice Lloyd's annual reports—as indeed, the hon. Gentleman did. I appreciate that this is a sensitive and controversial matter, but the Interception of Communications Act 1985 provides a very tightly controlled framework within which Secretaries of State must operate. I hope the whole House will be reassured in the light of what I have said that matters relating to interception of communications are given very careful attention and are fully subject to the controls provided for in the Act.

Mr. and Mrs. F. Howard

12.59 pm

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): I thank my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for coming to the House to deal with an important point affecting two of my constituents. She has had to reschedule an important meeting with the National Association of Probation Officers, but I know that, just as it deals with the welfare of individuals, so must Back Benchers and Ministers deal with individuals as individuals when the need arises, and this is one such instance.

My hon. Friend will know from having seen the correspondence in respect of my constituents, Mr. and Mrs. Howard of 5 Kentchurch close, Hereford, that we have been in correspondence on the matter for some two years now. That is not to say that the problem arose two years ago. It started in 1978 and came to a head in 1983. It was as a consequence of a festering sense of grievance that Mr. Howard first came to see me in 1988. Since then we have been running the issue and, accordingly, I felt it appropriate to explore it on the Floor of the House.

My hon. Friend will know that Mrs. Howard reached retirement age on 10 May 1977 and on 31 May 1978 decided to draw the graduated retirement benefit to which she had contributed. My hon. Friend will be aware of the defects of the old graduated retirement pension scheme, and the amount involved was a matter of coppers. On that basis, not unnaturally, Mrs. Howard did not bother to tell Mr. Howard that she had taken that course of action. To Mrs. Howard it was a matter of peanuts; and to Mr. Howard, it was, in his phrase, "a few coppers" and irrelevant.

At that time, the receipt of graduated pension did not debar a wife from reaping the benefits of the husband working beyond retirement age to enhance their pension entitlement—to achieve the increments to her basic retirement pension as well as his. Here we reach the start of the area of confusion.

My hon. Friend will know that the regulations changed on 5 April 1979. Since Mrs. Howard retired before that change in 1979, the question of any problem arising as a consequence could not occur. Therefore, Mrs. Howard could not be aware of any difficulties that might come about as a result of continuing to draw her graduated pension when her husband reached retirement age in October 1980 after the change in regulations.

When, perfectly properly, the Department of Health and Social Security, as it then was, sent Mr. Howard form BR1 asking whether he intended to retire or to continue working, he completed it to the best of his ability with the knowledge that he had. This was a personal matter. He discussed with his wife whether he should continue working if the opportunity arose, but he completed it in June 1980 still unaware that his wife was drawing the graduated retirement benefit. I emphasise that he answered "No" in good faith to the question in section 5 asking whether he was aware of his spouse being in receipt of graduated pension or of any other benefit of that nature.

Having examined the form myself, I may say that that question is not designed to ring alarm bells. To those in the know and who work on such matters all the time, the words "graduated retirement benefit" mean something. The ordinary person in the street may understand the meaning of "graduated retirement pension" and of "graduated retirement contributions", but not of "graduated retirement benefit". There is a failure to match the two. It certainly did not ring any alarm bells for Mr. Howard.

Because of Mr. Howard's negative response to that question, when the form arrived back at the DSS office, it did not ring any alarm bells there either. There was a misfit. There was not the facility for the office to tell Mr. Howard, "Because you answered yes to that question, a different set of circumstances apply." Because the question was answered in the negative, the office went along the path that told it there was nothing to worry about and that no problems would arise.

I take this opportunity to pay fulsome tribute to DSS officials in Hereford. They have been very helpful to Mr. Howard in trying to research his difficulties and to put their fingers on where the problems lay. Not unnaturally, Mr. Howard spent some time consulting those officers before coming to see me, and they were extraordinarily helpful. Perhaps I ought not to use the word "extraordinarily", because I find the DSS people in Hereford to be always very good. I count myself very fortunate in that regard. Nevertheless, the officers there were unable to throw much light on the saga, except to emphasise that there appeared to be an element of confusion.

Mr. Howard decided to accept his firm's invitation to continue working beyond retirement age, in the belief that by so doing he would enhance the retirement pension for both himself and his wife. Because he and the DSS were unaware of his wife's receipt of a graduated retirement pension, the office did not, and could not, advise him of the option that became available after the change in regulations, for a wife to withdraw from receipt of her graduated pension, so as to be able to enjoy increments in basic pension in due course. So the problem ground on.

After working for an additional three years and four months, Mr. and Mrs. Howard—Mr. Howard especially —were devastated to discover that their income was not to be as they had anticipated. When that first came to light, the shortfall was £5·11 a week, and the discrepancy has now increased to £7·05 a week. That is no small amount to someone whose sole income is a state retirement pension. Having worked beyond retirement age, the Howards find that being £7·05 a week out of pocket puts a different complexion on matters and on how they view their retirement.

In the correspondence that has been exchanged, the question arose whether Mrs. Howard was at any time informed of the situation. On the face of it, the mechanism for doing so is comprehensive. Lord Henley, who is my hon. Friend's colleague as Under-Secretary for Social Security in the other place, pointed out to me in his letter of 8 January 1990 that the Department's practice is to keep a record of forms issued and the relevant dates. According to the DSS, Mrs. Howard's pension papers are clearly marked as BR2101 and were issued on 28 July 1980.

BR2101, which has undergone a number of revisions since it was first published in 1979, would have set out for Mrs. Howard, had she received it, the current position and the way in which any changes could affect her. If Mrs. Howard had received it, it would have set out the position on her graduated pension.

Two issues result from that. First, it is obvious that there was some confusion when the regulations changed. The wording of the forms advising people of their options

is now far better than it was in 1979-80. When the regulations changed, it was not clear that some confusion could arise, and when it did, the forms were improved. It would be difficult now for people to fall into the trap that Mr. and Mrs. Howard find themselves in. Secondly, Mrs. Howard keeps personal papers meticulously, and it is clear that she did not receive the form BR2101, and as she did not know that she should have received it—why should she?; we only retire once—she did not look for it.

As far as I am aware, DSS papers are not normally sent by recorded delivery. In my experience, the Post Office is usually reliable, and special precautions are not required. However, I am disclosing a chapter in which one disaster followed another. I sometimes console myself with the saying that, if something starts to go wrong it will go right royally wrong. Macpherson's law of cussedness comes into play. It is not unknown for the occasional letter to go astray. All of us have experience of that happening. Although it is not a regular occurrence, it often happens to important papers with infuriating predictability.

I have much sympathy with Mr. Howard, or I should not have pursued the matter for the past two years. He has a genuine grievance—the knowledge that, if his wife had never worked and had not contributed in her own right, the extra time that he spent working would have resulted in an increased basic retirement pension for her at the full level, not the reduced level that she now receives. His extra three years and four months of work would have resulted in an enhanced pension for both of them.

In his letter to me on 22 August 1988, the then Under-Secretary of State at the Department of Social Security, the noble Lord Skelmersdale, pointed out that, until the April 1979 change, ability to receive full basic increments and graduated retirement benefit was an anomaly. I am not convinced of that. The anomaly is the reverse. Perhaps there was not much understanding of graduated retirement benefit, but it was perceived to be different from normal national insurance contributions. The contributions were put into two different columns on the payslip. The anomaly is the reverse because Mrs. Howard made graduated pension contributions—as did many other people—for no return.

I have a two-part solution to suggest to my hon. Friend because, in the Howard case, a genuine grievance needs to be redressed and we must consider how the problem should be addressed in future.

Surely, in a genuine difficulty of this kind, the first possible solution is that Mrs. Howard should be topped up to the extent of an additional £7·05 a week, as that would properly reflect the extra contribution that was made by Mr. Howard in his extra working time, without sacrificing the basic principle of having no duplication of benefit. The taxpayer is in exactly the same position. Mr. Howard is in exactly the same position as he would have been if he had tackled the matter the other way around, and Mrs. Howard would be in receipt of the £7·05. That is not unreasonable, because that is what the taxpayer would have expected to pay out had there not been a "misfit" of paper work.

The second possible solution is that arrangements be made for Mrs. Howard now to discontinue the receipt of graduated pension and therefore to qualify to receive the retirement pension increment of £7·05. That would roughly equate to the same position.

Those are the two ways in which I should like the difficulty to be resolved. My hon. Friend the Minister may have reasons why they will not be practicable, and I should like to hear them. It has been agreed by all that graduated pensions were a con and were understood by all too few. They needed scrapping, and they were scrapped. There is obviously still scope for confusion and injustice.

I should like my hon. Friend to tell me that she will review all the arrangements relating to the hangover of graduated pension and will look carefully again at the regulations to see how such nonsense can be ameloriated. There is a great danger that the state will be seen to be mean when genuine people are caught up through circumstances that may or may not have been in their control but in which they acted in good faith at all times.

1.16 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mrs. Gillian Shephard): I should like to begin by echoing the sentiment of my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford (Mr. Shepherd) regarding the circumstances of Mr. and Mrs. Howard's case. It is always unfortunate when individuals feel aggrieved by what they perceive to be unfair treatment by a Government Department. I know that my hon. Friend has pursued this matter most diligently with my Department on behalf of his constituents over a considerable period. I must congratulate him on his determined advocacy—as patient and courteous as always—and on the elequence of his speech. I thank him for his generous tribute to Department of Social Security staff in Hereford.

I shall address the points that my hon. Friend raised. However, he will understand that, as is often the case in social security matters, this case raises a number of complex and interrelated issues—first, the continued payment of graduated retirement pension; secondly, the position of individuals who decide not to claim their pension and earn increments to it; thirdly, the question of a woman's pension based on her husband's contributions; fourthly, the effect of claiming one benefit on another; and, fifthly, the responsibilities of the Department and the claimant. I should like to refer first to the graduated retirement pension.

As my hon. Friend is aware, between 1961 and 1975 a graduated pension was introduced as part of the state scheme. Its aim was to relate a person's retirement income to his or her pre-retirement income by way of an earnings-related element payable in addition to the basic pension. Payment of graduated contributions based upon one's level of earnings built up units of entitlement to graduated pension, and the size of graduated pension was determined by the number of units earned. My hon. Friend mentioned the change in legislation, and it is the case that the retirements of Mr. and Mrs. Howard spanned the change in legislation, but of course the point at issue is the choice that they made when Mr. Howard decided to retire. I shall refer to that point, of course.

The change in legislation was the Social Security Pensions Act 1975, which replaced the graduated pension scheme with the state earnings-related pension scheme. However, there are still many individuals with an entitlement to graduated pension on the basis of their contributions between 1961 and 1975—indeed, I am one of them. I should not wish to insult my hon. Friend by suggesting that he is as well.

The Social Security Pensions Act 1975, as amended by the Social Security Act 1989, provides that a person on

[Mrs. Gillian Shephard]

reaching pensionable age may choose not to claim state retirement pension and may earn extra pension—known as increments—for five further years. The practical effect of this is that an individual can increase the value of his or her pension by 7·4 per cent. per annum—37 per cent. over the five years.

Many individuals choose to do that and for many different reasons. For example, they may choose to do so for tax reasons or because they have a younger spouse and wish to retire at the same time. Many wish to continue in work beyond pensionable age and prefer to increase their pension by not claiming it until they either cease work or reach the age of 65 for women, or 70 for men, whichever comes first.

The concept underlying the policy of pension increments is to increase the pension of individuals who, by choice, forgo claiming any part of their pension entitlement from the state. It is not uncommon, as indeed was the case for Mr. and Mrs. Howard, for a woman to reach retirement age before her husband, at which stage she has the right to claim and receive any retirement pension she has earned on her own contributions during her working life. Her husband will continue to pay national insurance contributions in respect of his future state pension. As my hon. Friend will be aware, under pensions legislation, a man's contributions also provide his wife with an entitlement to state pension.

Again, it is not uncommon for a husband whose wife has already reached pensionable age on reaching pension age to continue in work or, for whatever reason, to choose to defer claiming his state pension entitlement. Should he do so, he will earn extra pension increments as long as he chooses not to claim his pension, up to a maximum of five years. His decision will also affect his wife, in that she likewise will not receive her pension derived from his contributions. In those circumstances, she too will earn increments, but only if she is not receiving any part of her own pension entitlement, including graduated retirement pension. I stress that point, as that is the case with my hon. Friend's constituents.

Central to a contributory benefits policy is the effect of the receipt of one social security benefit on the receipt of another. The arrangements affecting graduated pension and pension increments are consistent with that policy and are supported by logical argument. I remarked earlier that the underlying concept of pension increments is to recognise the situation of individuals who choose not to draw on their entitlement to contributory benefits. It follows that, if any claim to those benefits is made, no extra pension may be earned. As I will now explain more fully, those are the circumstances in which Mr. and Mrs. Howard found themselves.

I hope that hon. Members will not consider it inappropriate if I repeat some of the points made by my hon. Friend in describing the action taken by my Department in Mr. and Mrs. Howard's case. So that the House can fully consider Mrs. Howard's case, it may be useful to outline the circumstances surrounding her claim. Mrs. Howard reached 60 years of age in May 1978. She claimed her entitlement to state pension and was awarded graduated retirement benefit of, as my hon. Friend said, a matter of pence per week to commence on 1 June 1978. Mrs. Howard chose, as many people do in that situation, to receive her payments of graduated pension annually.

Mr. Howard reached 65 years of age on 13 October 1980. In June of that year, my Department issued Mr. Howard with the necessary claims package to enable him to claim, or not claim if he so chose, his state pension. In reply, Mr. Howard said that he wished not to claim his pension from October, but would continue in work beyond pensionable age.

Subsequently, on 28 July 1980, my Department sent a provisional entitlement notice to him. The form contained information about the effect of deferring retirement upon one's pension and also pointed out the effect of a spouse receiving any part of her own pension during the period of deferment. The form included a specific reference to graduated retirement pension.

From correspondence and from what my hon. Friend has said, I am aware that his constituents contest that they received the form BR2101, which contains the information regarding deferment and pension increments. We have of course looked into this carefully and our records confirm that both Mr. and Mrs. Howard were separately sent the relevant documents. Had they not received the forms, they would not know the outcome of the pension application which Mr. Howard had made in June. Routinely, both of them were sent a form, and the issue of those forms was recorded by the Department.

Obviously the Department has a responsibility in administering social security benefits to ensure that information is made available to help customers to make informed decisions—I believe that the Department does everything possible to discharge that responsibility.

My hon. Friend correctly noted that there are provisions which allow my Department to consider making ex gratia payments to compensate for any loss of income. The criteria for making such payments are clear: the onus of proof lies with the claimant to prove that he or she has been misled or misinformed by an official of the Department and, because of this, has suffered a loss of income. If we receive representation that this is the case, as with the case of my hon. Friend's constituents, we examine the circumstances carefully and sympathetically to establish whether there are grounds for considering an ex gratia payment. There are occasions on which the Department has considered itself at fault in cases and has taken the necessary steps to make compensatory ex gratia payments.

We have, of course, given this consideration to the Howards' case. Indeed their case would have been considered each time my hon. Friend sent in the next instalment of the story. However, I am satisfied that, as I have outlined, there are no grounds to support making such a payment. I do not believe that the Department misled or misinformed Mr. and Mrs. Howard. Indeed, according to the Department's records, Mr. and Mrs. Howard were sent notices of entitlement, which informed them of the effect of Mrs. Howard continuing to claim her graduated pension.

My hon. Friend feels that it is unfortunate that an individual who has worked and earned an entitlement to a small sum of graduated pension ends up receiving less than someone who has no entitlement to a pension based upon his or her own contributions. Perhaps it will help the House if I comment briefly on the national insurance fund and graduated contributions.

Although graduated contributions were calculated separately from flat rate contributions, it is a mistake to think that they were reserved exclusively for the payment of graduated pensions. Together with flat rate contributions and the Exchequer supplement, they were paid into the national insurance fund from which the full cost of all contributory benefits is met. An individuals' contributions are not invested for his or her own future use or that of their dependants. I know that my hon. Friend understands that the scheme is by its nature redistributive and operates on a "pay-as-you-go" basis, with today's benefits being paid for by today's contributors, who will in turn be supported by the next generation of contributors.

I am also aware that my hon. Friend believes that this case should be resolved so as to leave Mrs. Howard no worse off than she would have been had she not received her graduated pension. As I have already explained, the only mechanism open to the Department is that of ex gratia payments, and I have already explained why that mechanism would be extremely difficult in this case. In any case, I do not believe that such payments would be appropriate where a claimant represents that he or she wishes to reconsider a decision that was made many years earlier.

I reassure my hon. Friend that we have examined every aspect of this case most carefully—again and again. I am sorry that I cannot be more helpful to him today. I also assure him that the good faith of Mr. and Mrs. Howard is not in question; nor has it been questioned at any stage in correspondence between my hon. Friend and the Department. I congratulate him again on the way in which he presented his case. He has allowed the House to discuss the important issues raised.

I regret any case in which individuals feel that they have been unfairly treated. I sympathise with any such individuals, but I am satisfied that, in this case, the Department has acted fairly and impartially in applying the law as it relates to the circumstances of Mr. and Mrs. Howard.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: Will my hon. Friend examine the regulations to see whether any improvements can be made, as I requested?

Mrs. Shephard: I reassure my hon. Friend that the Department continually reviews and monitors the performance of all its benefits.

Health Service (Gwynedd)

1.30 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Debates on the financial crisis in Gwynedd health authority seem to have become a regular feature in the Chamber. We had one in June 1988 and another in March last year. The Minister of State has good reason to remember the latter debate because on that occasion, as on this, he had to stand in for his colleague the Under-Secretary of State for Wales, who was then, as now, indisposed. We send him our best wishes for a speedy recovery.

The Minister also deserves our commiserations because once again he has picked up a poisoned chalice. He needs no reminding about the financial crisis and cuts in the Health Service in Gwynedd. For example, the closure of services at Llandudno general hospital has been a matter for public outcry in his constituency. Whatever brief he may have today, the Minister knows in his heart of hearts that the present situation cannot continue. There must be a resolution of the perpetual state of crisis in the Health Service in Gwynedd.

The present position goes back to three years ago when a team of consultants published a damning indictment of the lack of budgetary control in Gwynedd health authority. The authority then had a cash shortfall of £1·3 million. A desperate programme of action was drawn up to bring the authority back into balance, supposedly by March 1990. The consultants said that the plan was feasible but to my mind it was entirely and hopelessly unrealistic.

The programme was based on closing six valuable community hospitals. The consultants thought that that could be achieved within 12 months. How on earth the Welsh Office allowed such a palpably unrealistic time scale to be adopted defies credulity when it was clear that five of the six proposals would be fiercely opposed by the communities affected. The closures also showed a cavalier contempt for the Welsh Office planning paper SPP5 representing a complete departure from its procedures. Even if the five hospitals had been closed 18 months ago as the consultants assumed, the claimed saving would have amounted to about £1 million a year. The shortfall now facing the authority is £4 million a year. So let us have no excuses that the delay in the closures caused the present crisis.

While I am referring to hospital closures, I again protest that Porthmadog, in my constituency, will be left without a single hospital as a result of the changes. It will be dependent on a converted workhouse in a nearby village. I also protest at the way in which Caernarfon has been treated and the closure of the cottage hospital there. It is a much-loved hospital which has served the town well. I know that because it was at that hospital that our two sons died. I remain committed to turn every stone possible to ensure that the health authority and the Welsh Office are not allowed to get away with robbing the town of such vital services.

I ask the Minister to look again at the way in which Caernarfon is being left with no casualty cover whatever following the cottage hospital closure. Will he review the lack of information given to the public about alternative provision? In particular, will he undertake to review the working of the alternative arrangements that the health

[Mr. Dafydd Wigley]

authority is preparing in the context of long-term plans for the health services in the Caernarfon area, about which the Secretary of State wrote to the authority on 20 April.

Will he also review the provision of GP beds in Caernarfon to see whether it is possible to replace the lost 14 beds at the cottage hospital by using the empty fourth ward in Eryri hospital in Caernarfon for that purpose?

Can the Minister clarify what will be the position when the cottage hospital building is disposed of by the authority? It was built largely by voluntary subscription in the town. If a use for that building can be found that is compatible with the original purposes—perhaps in the context of developing care-in-the-community proposals in the wake of the NHS Bill—could the authority be prevailed on to regard such a proposal sympathetically? Can the Minister guarantee that any funds obtained from the sale of the hospital will be available to improve the Health Service provisions in the Caernarfon area?

The crisis facing Gwynedd health authority is infinitely worse. I understand that Deloittes, the consultants, are again investigating the position. Can the Minister tell the House when we can expect their findings?

The extent and depth of the crisis was brought home graphically to my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) and me last month when we met some 200 employees of the health authority. They poured out their souls to us, describing their despair at the way in which cuts were hitting services. It was not in any way a politically motivated gathering. It was a cross-section of professional health care workers, from ancillary to consultant level, who told us of the extent of the rundown.

We heard of wards being left empty, posts frozen and nurses who worked all day, going home at six o'clock only to return at 10 pm to work a night shift because of the lack of cover caused by frozen jobs. I was told of stroke victims unable to get physiotherapy or speech therapy because of staff shortages. We heard of services, such as the child development unit, in danger of being closed and of cuts in the family planning service. The staff spoke of the breakdown of trust between the top administration and those delivering the services. They felt that they were being asked to shoulder an ever-increasing workload with inadequate staff resources.

An example of how this continuing crisis has affected one department can be seen from the case of radiology. In 1983, in the old hospitals, about 1,200 cases were being treated a month by 28 radiographers. Initially after opening ysbyty Gwynedd, the number of radiographers increased to 32, but it quickly dropped back to 28. In 1990, the same complement of staff is having to deal with 5,000 cases a month. Because of the freeze on heads, there are only 24 radiographers in situ. Over the summer, with the holiday period at hand and any further freezing of jobs, the number could be down to 15. Clearly, that is inadequate. A year ago the waiting list was only three weeks, but now it is up to 20 weeks and it is likely to worsen this summer to about 30 weeks. Those who are caught by such a waiting time include patients possibly suffering from cancer of the colon. One member of staff has even suggested that the policy of freezing radiography posts is deliberately undertaken to reduce the number of cases that have to be treated, thereby avoiding expenditure on patients. The situation is grotesque.

During the past three weeks there was a strike by senior secretaries—mercifully it was settled this week—who since last November have been trying to negotiate a settlement, but they have found nothing but prevarication.

All that has had a traumatic effect on staff morale. There seems to be a breakdown of confidence between senior managers and those who provide the services. One specialist told me that he had not seen a senior administrator for six months or a member of the authority, other than the chair, for six years. No wonder morale is at rock bottom.

If asked, the health authority attributes the cause of the dilemma to three factors. The first is underfunding by the Welsh Office. Provision is too low to cover wage settlements and inflation. The allegation was supported by the Deloittes report of 1987, which stated that that had "contributed significantly to the deterioration of the financial position."

Since 1987 that has cumulatively worsened.

Secondly, the health authority says that the capital allocation, based by the Welsh Office on a formula which is unfair, gives Gwynedd, which has more than 80 per cent. of the population of Wales, a capital allocation of under 4 per cent. I understand that the Welsh Office is undertaking a review of the capital allocation methods. Perhaps the Minister can tell us when that will be completed.

The third bone of contention is the revenue allocation formula which is used by the Welsh Office. The health authority feels that the use of an element called the standardised mortality ratio is unfair because the authority is penalised for keeping people alive. If more people died, it would get more money. Clearly that is ridiculous. I understand that in England the weighting given to the ratio is being halved. Will the Minister undertake to make a similar change for Wales?

The health authority contends that it is the most efficient in Wales and it has used Welsh Office figures to show that the cost per standard unit of work at ysbyty Gwynedd is the lowest in Wales. In 1988 it was £713 per unit compared with the Welsh average of £864. However, because that authority is strapped for cash by the Welsh Office, it is having to shut hospitals, close wards, reduce services and worsen the health care available to the people of Gwynedd. The irony is that, once the authority closes the community hospitals, it will not be able to move patients out of ysbyty Gwynedd to those hospitals and that will have a significant effect on their efficiency. A study by Kernick and Davies showed that, if a community hospital is not available, it is likely that half of the patients will need to be admitted to a general hospital.

The important message that emerges from the reasons given by the health authority for its overspend is that, in each instance, it claims that it is the Welsh Office's fault. Time after time health authority people have gone on record to say that. That allegation is not made by a so-called loony-left authority, nor by a politically motivated cabal putting out anti-Government propaganda. The Gwynedd health authority is controlled by hand-picked people; they have been picked by the Welsh Office to do the job asked of them. They are the people, however, who are now telling the Welsh Office that they cannot maintain standards of service because they have not been given the necessary resources.

As I understand it, the Welsh Office has replied by saying that Gwynedd health authority has been given quite enough cash, that it is one of the best-funded health

authorities in Wales, and that it should get on with the job and stop squealing. Both claims cannot be right. If the authority has adequate resources, it is obviously using them wrongly by spending too much on bureaucracy and working inefficiently. If that is the case, how much longer is the Welsh Office prepared to tolerate such an inadequate performance? The final responsibility for the health authority rests fairly and squarely on the shoulders of the Secretary of State. If it is doing a hopeless job, he should be aware of that and do something about it.

Alternatively, perhaps the health authority is not as ineffective and incompetent as Ministers would have us believe. Perhaps health care in Gwynedd is underfunded, which is a direct cause of the crisis. If that is so, the blame again rests entirely on the shoulders of the Welsh Office. After successive years of alleged underfunding, we are now faced with a mega-crisis.

In my opinion, for what it is worth, Gwynedd health authority has not been very clever in its financial control, nor in its ability to justify capital expenditure projects. Gwynedd has been desperately underfunded in terms of capital, possibly because of its inability to present persuasive evidence to the Government. If Gwynedd had received the average capital allocation per head of population for Wales, it would have received an extra £14 million in the past five years. Current expenditure in Gwynedd on health has been 9 per cent. lower than the Welsh average for the past five years. If that expenditure had been in line with the Welsh average, we would have had between an extra £4 million and £5 million per annum and there would have been no crisis.

The leadership of the health authority seems incapable of getting the message across or compiling a coherent strategy to give the Government the confidence to back its judgment with the necessary cash.

Is the Minister satisfied with the performance of the health authority in the past three years? Does he believe that it is putting forward an adequate case for capital investment? Does he believe that the health authority membership understands the strength of feeling in places such as Porthmadog, Caernarfon, Llangefni and Llandudno and taken it sufficiently into account? Are monitoring systems available to the Welsh Office to scrutinise the performance of Welsh authorities adequate? Is he happy that Gwynedd health authority has a coherent, strategic plan to which it is working? In the light of experience in Gwynedd, can he seriously claim that the Health Service is safe in Conservative hands?

The previous Secretary of State for Wales had no interest in the Health Service and during his term of office the situation got out of hand. One way or another, the Welsh Office must bear responsibility if there is a health authority in Wales that it regards as inadequate and in which it has lost confidence. The Welsh Office should sack that authority and start again. On reflection, however, if the Welsh Office finds that it has been underfunding the authority, particularly on the capital side, now is the time to be honest, admit the mistake and give the health authority the money it needs at least to sustain basic services rather than totter from crisis to crisis.

The choice for the Minister is simple: either he backs the authority with more cash, or sacks it for incompetence. The one thing the Welsh Office cannot do is continue to ignore the problem in the hope that it will go away. The need for leadership and positive action is great, and now is the time for it.

1.45 pm

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn) *rose——*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Does the hon. Member have the consent of the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) and of the Minister to speak?

Mr. Jones: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Minister will be aware of the Welsh proverb, dyfal donc a dyr y garreg. He will agree that, on this issue, each donc has been very dyfal indeed.

It gives neither my colleagues nor I any pleasure constantly to highlight the financial crisis which faces Gwynedd health authority. As my hon. Friend the Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) said, this is the third time in 14 months that we have taken part in a debate of this nature.

The authority has been facing recurrent cash crises for a number of years. We are told by the Minister and others that the authority has plans in hand to deal with its financial problems, yet we find ourselves in a real mess. When will the buck-passing stop?

The Secretary of State carries the ultimate responsibility for ensuring the delivery of a comprehensive health care service in Wales. That is made clear in the legislation that established the service and has been repeated in amending legislation ever since. While the Secretary of State delegates responsibility for the day-to-day provision of health care in Wales to area health authorities, if an authority fails to discharge its responsibility to provide a comprehensive service, the Secretary of State has a duty to intervene.

How can Gwynedd health authority provide that level of service if it closes small hospitals without replacing them with decent community provision, if it closes wards, cancels operations, prepares to sack up to 200 of its staff, faces a massive loss of confidence by consultants and other medical staff and has its management team severely criticised by consultants sent in by the Welsh Office?

Any further delay by the Welsh Office in tackling this problem will be a massive dereliction of duty. The Minister must assure us that he has a plan of action to solve the crisis. If that plan is positive and imaginative, he will have our full support.

1.47 pm

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Mr. Wyn Roberts): The provision of health services in Gwynedd has always been a problem, and I speak as a Gwynedd Member of 20 years' standing. Llandudno hospital, for example, in my constituency has been under some kind of threat throughout most of those years, and even before I became a Member it was threatened.

The problems of Gwynedd health authority are particularly acute at this time because the authority has, properly, tried to put through a rationalisation scheme which would enable it to stay within budget in future years. The rationalisation scheme has meant taking painful decisions about closures of local hospitals which are very dear to the hearts of local people because of the great service that they have rendered in the past.

All of that might be bearable if the prospect of better services in future was bright and clear but, sad to relate, it is not so; and the authority's present problems are exacerbated by its current deficit which it is trying to

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eliminate by a variety of measures involving a curtailment of services. That—very much in outline—is the background against which this debate is taking place.

The crucial questions are, as hon. Members have noted, whether the authority is adequately financed currently and to achieve better levels of service which are its aim for the future. I say in parenthesis that I have yet to meet an authority that, however generous its allocation, could not do with more money. The demand for finance is endless in the NHS. No authority relishes the prospect of a closure. It knows only too well of the popular outcry that ensues.

The authority claims to be underfunded, so I will make clear Gwynedd health authority's position. The authority's revenue funding this year, taking account of the funding for the review bodies' pay awards, is £69·6 million, an increase of £4·7 million, or 7·2 per cent., in cash terms over last year's allocation.

The authority is forecasting a likely overspend of about £4 million this year. Its problems result from the burden of overspending which built up in previous financial years and which it has not yet successfully tackled. It is, with the help of management consultants, currently working to retrieve the situation and to identify further remedial measures which will allow it to achieve financial balance.

The authority has a statutory obligation to plan its expenditure within its notified allocations, and this is what it is in the process of doing. So long as it can demonstrate that it has a sound strategy for achieving financial balance, it will continue to receive sympathetic consideration from the Welsh Office as regards any reasonable request for temporary financial assistance.

We dispute the authority's claim to be under-resourced. The authority is in fact shown by both the capital and revenue formulae used to assess the relative funding position of Welsh health authorities to be one of the best resourced authorities in Wales.

Gwynedd health authority has questioned the validity of the formulae assessments, and last year commissioned a firm of management consultants to review the formulae. This was subsequently considered by the joint NHS-Welsh Office resource allocation working group which was conducting its own review of the formulae. RAWG recommended, and following consultation with other health authorities my right hon. Friend accepted, that there should be no major changes to the revenue formula and that various changes proposed in respect of the capital formula should be deferred, pending further consideration of the impact of the White Paper "Working for Patients" on allocation arrangements generally. I shall return to funding issues later, but I want to be absolutely sure that I deal as adequately as I can with Caernarfon cottage hospital, which featured prominently in the speech of the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) for understandable reasons.

Gwynedd health authority's proposals for Caernarfon cottage hospital entailed the closure of 14 GP beds and the minor casualty service. It suggested that the physiotherapy service planned for the hospital would not be started, the dental service currently provided at the hospital would be reprovided elsewhere, and the speech therapy offices would be relocated in alternative accommodation.

The hon. Member referred in particular to the loss of the minor casualty unit at the Cottage hospital. The writ provided treatment only for minor casualty cases and major accident victims were, and will continue to be, treated at ysbyty Gwynedd. When he considered the authority's proposals, my right hon. Friend was of the view that during GP surgery hours minor casualty cases would be likely to be treated at local GP surgeries, but he accepted that such cases seeking treatment outside those hours would be likely to have to travel to ysbyty Gwynedd, some seven miles away. Gwynedd health authority has given its assurance that ysbyty Gwynedd will be able to deal with the additional demand on its accident and emergency unit as a result of the closure of the minor casualty service at Caernarfon.

I understand that a notice has been placed at the cottage hospital redirecting casualty patients to ysbyty Gwynedd and that public notices of the closure of the unit are appearing in various local papers during the course of this week. The health authority accepts that ideally it should have advertised its alternative arrangements earlier.

The consideration of future minor casualty provision in Caernarfon is for the health authority to decide, but I am certain that it will take into account the hon. Gentleman's useful suggestions in any plans that it may bring forward.

Turning to the hon. Member's discussion of possibilities of reproviding the GP medical beds formerly at the cottage hospital, let me say that their reprovision was not a proposal put to my right hon. Friend by the health authority, which made it clear that it needed to make the revenue savings associated with their use. Approval was therefore given to their closure on that basis.

Whether any GP medical beds might be provided elsewhere, such as at Eryri hospital, as the hon. Gentleman suggested, is a matter for the health authority and the decision letter made it clear that my right hon. Friend expected the health authority to keep health service provision in the Caernarfon area in the long term under review and to publish its updated plans.

Following my right hon. Friend's approval of the closure proposal, disposal of the cottage hospital building is a matter for the health authority once it has complied with the conditions set down in the decision letter for full closure. The authority will be entitled to retain the capital receipts in order to augment the resources available for its capital programme. Should a voluntary organisation or the social services department make an acceptable offer to purchase the building, I am sure that the health authority would give it serious consideration.

Much has been said about revenue and capital funding, and I shall deal with those issues as far as I can. In terms of revenue funding, the White Paper changes require health authorities to be funded in line with their weighted population share rather than, as now, in terms of the catchment areas that they serve. Therefore, that formula disregards cross-boundary flows of patients but will otherwise be like the present formula in so far as it will reflect the size and age structure of each authority's population and will take account of other factors, such as morbidity, that reflect differences in relative needs. Proposals for the new formula are being developed in consultation with RAWG and will be subject to further consultation with the service as a whole later this year. It is, of course, important that the formula is generally acceptable to the service.

At present, capital allocations are based on the well-known capital formula. White Paper changes, particularly in relation to the new roles of health authorities and hospitals, mean that the formula approach needs to be recommended. RAWG has been consulted on the options for allocating future capital in the light of the new arrangements and a consultation paper will be issued to the service early in the summer.

I am aware of the constraints that Gwynedd health authority feels that the existing capital formula shares approach places it under. I am aware of its desire to see changes in the revenue and capital formula. I remind the House that the existing formulae are accepted by the other authorities in Wales as reasonably fair. The capital formula was unanimously supported by health authority chairmen when it was introduced in 1984.

The new capital formula will be introduced after 1991-92 because, in order to allow stability for planning purposes, health authorities have been advised that capital allocations in that year will be based on the present formula. The exact timing of the introduction of the new capital funding arrangements has yet to be determined. It will depend on the outcome of the consultation process and, as with revenue, there will need to be a transitional period for phasing in the changes.

I hope that what I have said makes it clear that we are developing an approach to the future of revenue and capital funding of authorities in Wales in consultation with the service. However, until the details have been settled it will not be possible to be specific about the effect of changes and the time scale in which they can be achieved.

In terms of the future, hon. Members will know that Gwynedd health authority has engaged management consultants, Coopers and Lybrand, Deloitte, to assist with a review of its finances and services. I stress that the management consultants have not been appointed by the Welsh Office or to dictate to the authority the way forward. The authority is being assisted by the management consultants in looking at the current position and possible options for the future. In June, which is when we expect the consultants' report, authority members are due to consider a report from its officers, drawn up with the assistance of the management consultants. It is likely that the report will set out options for the future which will have to be considered and decided upon by the authority members. Any substantial changes in the service considered necessary in the future will be subject to consultation before they can be implemented.

I would not wish to disguise my or my colleagues' disappointment at the continuing problems of financial control in Gwynedd health authority. None the less, there is evidence that the authority is addressing both these problems and the opportunity represented by the NHS reforms.

Mr. Wigley: I am grateful to the Minister for his response to some of the issues that I raised. Does he recall that we were in exactly this position about two years ago, in 1987? At that time there were commitments, and the authorities still blame the Welsh Office for not having enough cash. How long do we have to go along this road before some positive action, some leadership, is taken by the Welsh Office to find more cash or to sort out the authority?

Mr. Roberts: Positive action has already been taken in the NHS White Paper and in the legislation. I assure hon. Members that my colleagues and I are determined that the health authority is placed on a sound footing so that it can offer its residents the quality service to which they are entitled.

Community Care (Mentally Handicapped)

2 pm

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister on his appointment. I owe him a double debt of gratitude because not only is he responding to this debate, but he visited Bolton earlier this week when he had only just taken on his new responsibilities. It was his first regional ministerial visit, and it was most helpful and useful.

I am sure that my hon. Friend will recall that he visited the Heywood pilot project for day therapy services and met some of those suffering from profound physical and mental handicaps and also their families. Those people benefit from the much-needed services provided by that pilot project. Later that day, my hon. Friend visited the health authority headquarters for a unique meeting with people in the area responsible for community care. Six groups were represented: the parents handicap action group; the social services, through its newly appointed chairman and the director of social services; the North Western regional health authority; Bolton health authority; the community health council and the Brookvale voluntary centre at Prestwich, which sent two directors. That centre provides a service that does not really fit the North Western regional health authority model. However, it provides a high quality of service at a relatively low cost, and it has a long waiting list of parents who want their children to go there. The meeting was remarkable, because it enabled many people to get together who otherwise would not often have the opportunity to talk about the need for services.

I wish to concentrate on those who suffer from profound mental and physical handicaps, as they have the greatest priority need. The meeting discussed the need for a centre of excellence in Bolton to provide a service for those people. We discussed the need for both capital and revenue funding and also the need for both the centre itself and the provision of a network of homes. We must not think that we can rely simply on a dispersed network of homes to provide all the necessary facilities and services.

Bolton faces a crisis of need for severely handicapped people with challenging behaviour. There is a chronic shortage of day care therapy, respite care and residential care. The causes of the crisis are numerous, but, in particular, handicapped people are now living much longer because of the better care available. There is a crisis in the immediate locality because of the stop placed on admissions to long-stay mental institutions such as Brockhall and Calderstones. Bolton has a particular problem because of the excess cost of the network homes, which has resulted in a shortfall of provision. There is also a shortfall in the provision of other domiciliary services for those who are still at home. There is a complete inadequacy of domiciliary therapy services for the profoundly multiple handicapped who are at home.

The result of all that is a major problem. There are children who, after they reach the age of 19, are regressing because of the lack of suitable services. Parents are at breaking point. If my hon. Friend the Minister had spent longer in Bolton, he could have met parents such as Mrs. Hargreaves. She has often written to me saying that she does not know how she can continue to look after her son.

Because of the lack of facilities in Bolton, people are being sent elsewhere, and that is the complete opposite of what I understand by community care. In addition, because wards at Brockhall are being closed, people are being moved from pillar to post, from ward to ward, because there is no alternative provision for them in Bolton. As the chairman of the social services committee said, we now have a two-tier service in Bolton. For some there are the neighbourhood network homes, and for others, who are still in the family home, there is a most inadequate service.

The solution that I put forward at the meeting and which I press again now is that we should build and staff a centre of excellence in Bolton which will provide day therapy services for 20 or 25 people each day, and a respite care service with some 12 beds. That would provide a support and advice service for some 80 families and, possibly, a service to other areas—a mini Peto centre in Bolton.

I want to link such a centre of excellence with the need for a medium secure unit, as has been accepted in many of the reports that have been available in recent years which suggest that a unit with two times 12 beds should be considered for Bolton. I press my hon. Friend to investigate the need for such a service in Bolton and to question the North Western regional health authority on its attitude to the provision of funds for such a centre, asking it to explain further its preoccupation with looking only at the provision of neighbourhood network homes on a dowry basis for those coming out of the long-stay institutions.

I mentioned to my hon. Friend the other day that a former permanent secretary at the Department of Health and Social Security said that, if one is not confused about community care, one is not thinking clearly. I have found this a difficult subject to think clearly about, but it is much simpler to understand the issues if one considers where the greatest priority lies. I have no doubt that the greatest priority is those people who suffer from profound mental and physical handicaps and who present challenging behaviour. According to the Department of Health's 1989 report entitled, "Needs and Responses", they present

"One of the most serious challenges to care in the community".

In a recent letter to me, Mencap said that its research into the needs of that group shows

"an abysmal lack of appropriate help, support and relief for these families".

Therefore, in this short debate, I want to concentrate on the needs of that group as the greatest area of priority.

There is no doubt that in Bolton that group experiences the greatest shortfall, and I am sure that that is the case nationally as well. The people we are talking about are not only mentally handicapped; many of them are blind and/or deaf and/or paralysed. It is difficult to think of people with greater needs. We must bear in mind the suffering of those people, the massive burden of care on their relatives and the great love that those relatives give their children, but also the great sacrifices involved.

If it is possible to prove blame in a court of law, damages in excess of £1 million can be assessed for people with such severe handicaps. Various figures have been given, but in a letter that I received yesterday Mencap estimates that there are about 32,000 such people nationally, approximately 50 per 100,000 of the population—a higher figure than some of the estimates that I have seen. If we multiply the 32,000 people by £1 million as the value of the damages that would be assessed

if it were possible to prove some blame, we would be looking at a problem which nationally has a value of £32 billion. That is the size of the problem that we are addressing in this short debate.

The problem has been dumped largely on the shoulders of loving carers such as Mrs. Cummings, whom my hon. Friend met. She did not volunteer for the task, but she has taken it on magnificently, and we owe every possible help to such people. In many cases, the problems are too great for parents to cope. We know from the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys that 5,500 severely handicapped children are in institutional care because their parents cannot cope with the severity of their handicaps.

It is totally wrong for such children to be living in institutions of that kind. They need the loving care of a family even more than ordinary children. During the debate, I shall refer briefly to the work of Peggy Jay and Exodus, which has campaigned for years for children to leave long-stay hospitals for the mentally handicapped. The figure has fallen from 4,000 many years ago to about 500 currently, but Peggy Jay is concerned that 12,000 children are still admitted annually for short stays in such hospitals.

When I met Peggy Jay yesterday, I noted some of the points that she made. She said that it was a long-standing problem. From the days of the Curtiss committee in 1946, when mentally handicapped children in residential long-stay mental hospitals were described as the most deprived group in the community, they have consistently been overlooked by successive Governments. In 1981, the then Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, my noble Friend Lord Jenkin, said that long-stay hospitals were no place for children. The present Government, says Peggy Jay, are to be congratulated on reducing the number to 500—but at 12,000, the number of short-stay admissions is far too high.

Until the Government decree that no child should be admitted to long-stay mental institutions, local authorities will continue to fail to provide proper alternatives for respite care, including properly developed fostering and adoption services. I may add that anyone who has visited the Sunflower ward at Brockhall knows how unsuitable those facilities are not only for the children but for adults who are there. I return to last Monday's meeting in Bolton. It is ironic that the problem should have reached crisis proportions in Bolton, because it pioneered the establishment of community care network homes. What has gone so wrong in Bolton? The Parents Handicapped Action Group voices the massive concerns of parents, and the national development team's report published in March 1987 included a lengthy catalogue of failures in Bolton, despite the spending of massive sums on network care homes. At one stage, £1·7 million was provided over three years for the largest pilot scheme in the country. I contend that the bureaucrats failed to identify and serve the real needs of the population.

I quote briefly from the team's report. Paragraph 9 says that joint groups

"have failed in their major objective . . . of service provision as a whole"

Paragraph 43 says:

"A network to be truly effective needs to offer a comprehensive locally-based service. Bolton Neighbourhood Network Scheme does not as yet offer such a service to clients with special needs . . . Unless access is obtained to additional resources, wide gaps in the service seem likely to remain."

Paragraph 93 says:

"All efforts should be made to extend the availability of short-term care for adults with mental handicaps. This should include those with special needs and profoundly handicapped people. There is clearly a great deal of unmet need in this respect within Bolton."

Paragraph 140 says:

"Adult residential provision is sadly lacking in quality and quantity and adult special needs provision requires considerable development in terms of day care, residential care and domiciliary support. It is understandable but inexcusable that the most needy individuals should be given the lowest priority in the development of community services."

Paragraph 144 says:

"Short-term care is desperately lacking, in particular for special needs adults."

Paragraph 145 says:

"A separate unit is urgently needed for this handful of individuals, staffed and equipped for this difficult task."

Paragraph 146 says:

"The neighbourhood networks offer an exciting variety of types of accommodation for adults but parents are adamant that there is a place for imaginative accommodation for larger groups which offer more protection and local social stimulation than that which is currently fashionable. Eager young administrators and care workers ignore parents' views at their peril on this matter. Current philosophies may fade as their shortcomings are revealed. We ask that any plan be judged in terms of the quality of life it promises rather than conforming to contemporary and possibly temporary theoretical notions."

That is the very point on which I should like my hon. Friend to question the North Western regional health authority most closely. I asked the North Western regional health authority to carry out a survey of unmet needs in all its areas. I was somewhat surprised to find that it received responses from only two thirds of the areas, but hopefully we will get responses from all of them. However, the responses received show that there is a high level of unmet need.

In a note dated 2 February, Bolton said:

"A major initiative is required if a service crisis is to be avoided . . . people with profound handicaps, and challenging behaviour . . . are finding that services are grossly inadequate . . . Suitably skilled staff must be recruited so that we do not end up with an army of community carers unable to provide the skilled input required."

Bolton community health council sent me a copy of a letter addressed to my hon. Friend the Minister in which the same problem is pointed out:

"there is a major shortfall of accommodation for people who have never been in long-stay hospital. It is estimated that a further 200 residential places are needed right now. . . . The day service in Bolton is full. . . . Often people with the greatest need seem to get the least."

What is to be done? The 1989 report by the Department of Health on needs and responses discussed the pros and cons of specialist units versus community placement and gives one of the disadvantages of a specialist unit as "staff burn-out". I have not shown that report to my wife, but I think that she will feel that that is not just a problem for specialists but one that is faced by all those who care for the severely disadvantaged groups that I am concentrating on in this debate.

There is no time to discuss the need for a centre of excellence in detail. The plan has been costed at £1 million a year. I do not know whether all that is totally necessary, but it shows the level that Bolton health authority is considering. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will question the North Western regional health authority about its rigid adherence to a model. I do not

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believe that any other regional health authority is insisting on such rigid adherence. I ask the Minister to press the regional health authority to look sympathetically at the need to fund a centre of excellence. When he considers the problem nationwide, I ask him to consider whether he can direct more resources towards the care of the profoundly mentally handicapped.

2.16 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) on his choice of subject for this debate, as it is one of substantial importance to a great many people, and to no one more than to him. I am not referring solely to those who suffer from a mental handicap. Equally important, the issue is of concern to parents, to relatives and to friends of people with mental handicap including those, like my hon. Friend, who have adopted mentally handicapped children.

My hon. Friend has raised an important issue about services in the north-west region. I will respond specifically to that issue in a moment, but I would like first to set out the national situation, as we see it, as the context for the regional issues that he raised.

Historically, the place for mentally handicapped people, particularly the severely handicapped, has been seen to be the hospital, under the care of consultants, and particularly of mental handicap nurses. Over recent years, however, it has become increasingly recognised that mentally handicapped people's needs are largely for what we now call social care—accommodation, social support, day services and assistance with using the general facilities of the community such as sports and leisure facilities.

Of course mentally handicapped people need health care, but much of that can be provided through the general services of the National Health Service and does not need to be provided specifically in mental handicap hospitals. Thus, over the past 20 years or more, we have seen a shift away from the residential placement of severely mentally handicapped people in hospital towards caring for them in a variety of community facilities. In parallel with that there has been growing recognition that the lead responsibility for services for people with a mental handicap lies with local authority social services departments rather than with district health authorities.

The Government's decisions on the Griffiths report, set out in our White Paper "Caring for People", emphasise the role of local authority social services departments in providing social care. As such, our proposals go "with the grain" of the way services for people with a mental handicap have been developing in recent years.

But the Government are far from believing that the introduction of the proposals in our White Paper and in the National Health Service and Community Care Bill will address all the issues of importance to people with a mental handicap. It is for that reason that my predecessor, now the Minister for Public Transport, my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman), set in hand a linked series of initiatives which officials in the Department, in collaboration with people from health and social services and the voluntary sector, are currently taking forward. I should like to set those out, partly because this is my first opportunity as Minister to do so, to emphasise that I am keen that the work should go ahead.

First, we are having a look at the whole question of the residential needs of people with a mental handicap, particularly those with a severe handicap. On the one hand, there are people who take the view that the only form of acceptable provision is community-based living in ordinary houses with just three or four mentally handicapped people supported by professional staff. On the other hand, there are those who believe that the security, companionship and skilled nursing support available in mental handicap hospitals offers an important model that should not be allowed to wither away.

My officials have been engaging in a series of visits to a variety of types of residential service in Holland and in this country, and have just completed a series of three full-day seminars to explore the findings of those visits with a much wider range of interests concerned with such services. They have been looking at the underlying values of different sorts of residential service, the practical advantages and disadvantages and, necessarily, costs.

Secondly, in parallel with this review of residential care, the social services inspectorate has carried out a study of day services provided by local authority social services departments. Its report was published last year under the title "Individuals, Programmes and Plans". The Department is now exploring the findings of the series of inspections with a view to seeing what implications there are for current national policy and for the possible issue of guidance to social services authorities.

Thirdly, we are undertaking a fundamental rethink of the continuing role of the National Health Service in relation to people with a mental handicap. As I have already said, the role of the specialist mental handicap hospital in the range of services for people with a mental handicap seems to be in decline. There is certainly a growing recognition that many of the health needs of people with a mental handicap can be met through the ordinary services for people provided by the National Health Service, and that no segregated provision is necessary.

On the other hand, there is recognition that people with a mental handicap have some health problems that need specialist services, and there is concern that, as the move to community-based services develops, the necessary specialist health care will cease to be available. Earlier in the year, the Department established a working party of health and social service managers and professional staff to examine those issues. The working party has already met three times, and it is due to report before the summer holidays.

I now refer to the issue that my hon. Friend referred to as the greatest priority: how to provide services for people with a mental handicap who show severely disturbed behaviour—often called challenging behaviour. Last year, we issued a document called "Needs and Responses", which was a distillation of the best practices that the Department had been able to identify. This year, we aim to set up a series of workshops to explore the views about "Needs and Responses" of professionals and others concerned with providing services for this small but very important group. The workshops will aim to identify whether the Department should undertake any further initiatives in this matter. Again, I hope that those workshops will be held well before the end of the year.

My predecessor's aim in initiating the separate streams of activity was to focus on what he and the Department believed to be four key issues for the development of services for people with a mental handicap, given the general trend of the past 20 years towards community-based services. I cannot, of course, anticipate the outcome of those initiatives, but our hope is to have something substantial to say to health and social service authorities about the development of future services by around the turn of this year.

I have set out the national perspective in some detail because we are aware that some people believe that services for people with a mental handicap are being neglected relative, for example, to the services provided for people with a mental illness. It is certainly the case that, over the past year or two, the Government have had to respond to a range of problems arising from the implementation of the 1975 White Paper, "Better Services for the Mentally Ill" and this has led to the introduction of the care programme approach and the proposed mental illness specific grant. Both are important advances in the provision for the mentally ill. We have certainly not been overlooking the needs of people with a mental handicap. On the contrary, as I have sought to show, we have initiated a major review of the key policy issues in the area, which I intend will give renewed impetus to the development of appropriate services for the mentally handicapped.

I would now like to turn specifically to the problems that my hon. Friend identified in relation to the services for the mentally handicapped in North Western regional health authority. I was pleased, on my first ministerial visit, to be able to go to my hon. Friend's constituency this Monday and to see for myself some of the services for the mentally handicapped provided in his city of Bolton. Regrettably, as time was short, I could not see as much as I should have liked. In particular, I wish that I had had time to visit some mentally handicaped people who had been resettled into ordinary homes in the Bolton area.

My hon. Friend referred specifically to the concerns of Exodus about the number of children with a mental handicap who are still in hospital. Many of them were admitted to hospital for conditions unconnected with their handicap and should be in hospital for no longer than necessary. Planned admissions for treatment, assessment, therapy or short-term care should normally lead to a special children's unit in or near the neighbouring community. There will often be a managerial part for the children's department of a mental handicap hospital.

I am sure that my hon. Friend will be pleased to hear that the issues related to the number of children in mental handicap hospitals will be part of the wider review of residential care, which was one of the four elements I described as being under way at present.

Mr. Jack Aspinwall (Wansdyke): Will my hon. Friend consider visiting the Wessex region? In the past few weeks, respite care has been highlighted, because the local health authority has contemplated making cuts in the number of houses available for mentally handicapped people. The problem is that people who use respite care are often on the edge of viability for looking after severely mentally handicapped people and only the fact that respite care is available enables them to continue. I ask my hon. Friend to visit the Wessex region soon and to see the position of respite care in the Wansdyke area.

Mr. Dorrell: I will look at the position of respite care in Wansdyke, to which my hon. Friend referred, and I will write to him specifically on that issue. I look forward to the opportunity, which I am sure will occur sooner rather than later, to travel to my hon. Friend's part of the world.

When I was in Bolton this week, I was interested to hear different views expressed by the various groups in the area on a range of subjects. It is clear that there is a fund of good will to succeed with resettlement and community services such as therapy and respite care. However, I detected a certain frustration, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East referred, that the regional health authority appears to be rigid in its interpretation of care in the community and that this is having two effects. First, it is preventing a full range of residential arrangements from being developed; secondly, in directing funds exclusively to the arrangements pioneered by the Bolton neighbourhood network scheme, it is likely to slow down the rate of resettlement out of the hospitals. This arises because that scheme puts a premium upon community support services which are extremely demanding of professional staff time. These are, of course, potentially serious disadvantages, if they are justified, because they stem directly from an explicit agreed policy of the regional health and social services departments.

We are not yet ready to give further guidance on the range of residential care to suit all degrees of mental handicap, because that is part of the process of the policy study, but in view of the feelings I heard expressed in Bolton this week, which my hon. Friend repeated, I shall ask the regional chairman of North Western region to see whether the time has come to begin discussions with all interested parties to see whether a less rigid approach to resettlement funds is required. It may be that the rigidity is seen by some simply because a particular scheme has not succeeded in the past, but the best way to clarify the matter is to ask the regional health authority chairman to pursue it, and I intend to do that. I hope that my hon. Friend will feel that I have responded at least in part to his concerns on that issue.

Finally, I thank my hon. Friend for his hospitality when I visited Bolton earlier this week. I frankly acknowledge that there are some worries about current provisions and that these issues will need to be addressed as our current initiatives in this field are fully developed. In the meantime, I hope that my hon. Friend will welcome my proposal to ask North Western region to consider whether it should be more flexible in the future than it has been in the past.

Industrial Tribunals

2.30 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): I am grateful for this opportunity of raising the case of Mr. Tobitt, a constituent, who has suffered considerable grievances over several years. I recognise that the House might not be able to redress those grievances, but I hope that this debate will make industrial tribunals and employers think carefully before they handle cases in future in the way in which this case was handled.

The appalling sequence of events followed a minor and largely unrelated disciplinary offence at Mr. Tobitt's work. Mr. Tobitt had worked for the *Financial Times* for six years—from 1982 until his dismissal on 19 May 1988. He was a satisfactory employee, but unfortunately his good record did not stand him in any stead in the events that then unfolded.

The facts, which are not disputed, are that Mr. Tobitt was arrested at work on 3 May 1988 for an alleged offence not connected with his later dismissal. It was alleged that he attacked a woman with acid and stole her handbag. The attack took place in Walthamstow at 7 am when Mr. Tobitt was at home in Hammersmith. The police alleged that his car was in the vicinity of the attack. Mr. Tobitt thinks that the police linked him to the attack because the lady was his ex-girlfriend. The police searched his car and found four copies of pornographic photographs, which had been reproduced on a *Financial Times* machine. Although the *Financial Times* was not part of the alibi, it was informed about the photographs by the police because —the police said—the photographs might have been used in court. The *Financial Times* then decided to suspend Mr. Tobitt for

"damaging the reputation of the company".

In dealing briefly with the court case, I hope that I shall not underestimate its importance and its effect on both Mr. Tobitt and the later handling of the case. The court case took place between 14 and 16 November 1988 at Snaresbrook Crown court. A witness stated that the attacker—the person who threw the acid in the face of the lady—was white. Mr. Tobitt is black. The case should have been dismissed. As was later acknowledged, the evidence did not stand up. At this stage—amazingly—the judge said that, although Mr. Tobitt was not the attacker, he could have been aiding and abetting, and he was therefore found guilty of that and sentenced to three years' imprisonment.

An appeal was lodged by Mr. Tobitt's solicitors, which he then won, but not before he had spent a month in prison for an offence that everybody agrees, and that the court made clear, and not only on technical or legal grounds, he could not possibly have committed or been connected with in any way. In other words, Mr. Tobitt left the appeal court with a clean reputation. The appeal court said that it was obvious that only one person was present at the attack.

It is important to note that the judge has ruled that the photographs, which were brought to the attention of the *Financial Times* by the police, should not have been used in court. That is an important point because of the issue of the reputation of the *Financial Times*.

On 16 May 1988 the first disciplinary hearing took place. There were two charges. The first was that Mr. Tobitt had been using the company's materials to produce the photographs. The second charge was that he was bringing the company into disrepute. The *Financial Times* had made it clear that the first charge—using the materials —was not sufficient ground to warrant dismissal. Indeed, that was stated several times, not least in a letter dated 19 May 1988 from the *Financial Times* to Mr. Tobitt which said that the use of the materials was not

"in itself sufficient grounds for dismissing you."

The *Financial Times* seemed to believe that if the material was used in court its reputation might be besmirched. That is pretty incredible. It is hypersensitive and absurd beyond reason. If many of us were in that position, we would think first and foremost that a person in this country was innocent until proven guilty. Therefore, we should not assume that what is produced and used in court is necessarily used in the appropriate way. The judge later ruled that the photographs should not and could not form part of the evidence. Again, that is important and it is a point that was overlooked.

Even if the *Financial Times* thought that the case would besmirch it, why did it not wait until after the court case? I draw attention to another quotation from the letter. It said:

"Four of the photographs still have the Financial Times name on them and are now in the possession of the police. It is highly likely that these photographs will be used in evidence in open court."

The *Financial Times* was wrong: it was not likely. In my judgment and that of the solicitor, it was highly unlikely. Nevertheless, that was the conclusion of the *Financial Times*. I shall return to that later.

When Mr. Tobitt appealed against the dismissal, the case seemed to centre more on the use of the photographs and of the machine than the reputation of the company. In any event, the tribunal decided against him. I should add that the tribunal hearing took place only a few days after Mr. Tobitt's release from prison. That is not exactly the best time for a hearing for someone who has had that experience for an offence that he did not commit. He had to go through a tribunal hearing at which no one represented him. That is one of the main points of the case, as the Minister will appreciate, and I shall return to it.

The *Financial Times'* thinking—inasmuch as it was thinking—seemed to be out of touch with reality and out of all proportion to the incident. It was entirely insensitive to the suffering that Mr. Tobitt had been through.

In the letter to Mr. Tobitt dated 11 May the *Financial Times* said:

"Your letter makes the point that the photographs you had produced on the company's equipment were not, in the end, used in open court"—

this was after the case—

"and therefore did not cause the company any embarrassment. This does not detract from the fact that at the time the decision was taken to dismiss you, it was highly likely that information about them and the circumstances surrounding their production would have become public knowledge. In the industrial tribunal's words the photographs were what the ordinary reasonable person would describe as pornographic".

I shall come back to that point, too. The letter continued:

"Therefore, any publicity about them linked to the Financial Times' name was likely to bring the reputation of the Financial Times into disrepute. In the end, although no publicity was received in open court, there was some publicity in the press . . . However, Mr. Gilbert"

one of the managers who judged the dismissal—

"had to consider whether your return to work, having been charged with such an offence, would have had an effect on the rest of the St. Clements press employees."

St. Clements press is the company under which the *Financial Times* operates. The letter goes on:

"I understand that Mr. Gilbert decided this was not relevant."

I should hope so. Who on earth even put that thought in the management's mind, given that Mr. Tobitt was found not guilty?

The case goes from bad to worse. The evidence is overwhelming that the *Financial Times* assumed that the photographs would be used in court. Indeed, it said so. It is impossible to escape the conclusion that the *Financial Times* assumed that Mr. Tobitt was guilty. It took no account of his defence.

The report of the disciplinary hearing states of the police:

"We were interested that they had inferred that the photographs could be exhibited in court. That's why I asked if you had anything else to say. Don't want to go into your case. But the pictures are an integral part of the case."

That was the view of the *Financial Times* and the police. It was not anyone else's view.

It is acknowledged that Mr. Tobitt produced the photographs at the request of the girl who wanted them done for a portfolio. The company, thinking that its image had been damaged, stated:

"Therefore, we have decided to summarily dismiss you for gross misconduct on the grounds that you have conducted yourself in a manner which has, and will, damage the reputation of the Company. The reputation of the Financial Times is of crucial importance."

The way in which the FT handled the case is damaging to it. It should be thoroughly ashamed of itself.

At the appeal hearing against dismissal two of Mr. Tobitt's representatives, who are trade union representatives, were absent. His other representatives said at the hearing that his side of the case was disadvantaged because it lacked full representation. Nevertheless, the hearing went ahead. The case shows the mess and panic that the FT got itself into. I have great respect for it as an economic and political journal, but its handling of the case was disgraceful. A short clip about the case appeared in *The Sun* and *Daily Mirror*. An FT manager, speaking at the appeal tribunal, said:

"I know that the Sun claim a circulation of four million readers and a readership of twelve million. The reason I make this comment is that the Financial Times is a paper with a unique reputation."

Why on earth is a strong and, presumably, responsible paper like the *Financial Times* panicking about a short piece appearing in *The Sun* and the *Daily Mirror* and fearing that it might damage its reputation? I am not sure that the FT knows anything about the readership of *The Sun* or the *Daily Mirror*. I would not think that the readership would be completely surprised that some people in the printing industry occasionally use machines to print pictures that should not be printed. One must be fairly out of touch with reality and, indeed, the reality of the print industry not to know that. Nevertheless, that does not justify its handling of the case.

Mr. Tobitt fully accepts that he should never have got involved in producing the material. He makes no issue about that, and the FT accepted that he agreed that he should never have done it. It is worth putting on the record why he did it. At the hearing he was asked:

"Why did your girlfriend want these photos reproduced?"

He said:

"She's a difficult girl and doesn't take a lot exactly. When she has had a few drinks, says she hated that sort of thing and said she did not know where to go, what to do. I suggested that she got a better job. She calmed down. Later, this was the first time the photos came up. She said, 'I know what you can do for me'. She works in a nightclub. She is always being asked out. Then she said she could make a book. I know how the actual thing came about. Her idea was to make a book with the photos. The idea was just to look at them, not create a sophisticated item. I suggested I would take them. I knew what she wanted to do. I wanted to keep control of them. I did not want to get mixed up but felt I could wean her off the idea of the photos. My idea was to drag it out."

It is worth pointing out that Mr. Tobitt was also helping the girl in other ways, including paying some of her bills because he found that when she was under less stress she could break away from some of the situations that she was getting herself into. One might say that he was doing a good voluntary service job, but I would not expect the FT, the police or anyone else to accept that.

The FT had counsel at the industrial tribunal, but the essential issue in this case is that Mr. Tobitt had no one at the tribunal and had just come out of prison. He could not afford a lawyer and his trade union felt that the tribunal, rightly or wrongly, was not the best machinery to deal with the case. Thus, Mr. Tobitt, just out of prison, was totally unrepresented at the tribunal. Surely in hearings linked to a court case a person should be offered legal aid. Mr. Tobitt's case was linked to a serious charge, which was later found to be utterly unfounded.

The FT argued that the reason for dismissal was that Mr. Tobitt had brought the paper into disrepute; he was not dismissed for printing the pictures. Curiously, the industrial tribunal said:

"The respondents"—

the FT—

"said that had the matter merely been that the applicant had used the respondents' equipment for the production of the photographs for his own purposes it is unlikely that dismissal would have resulted. It was more probable in those circumstances that the applicant would have been warned as to his future conduct. They based their decision to dismiss on the nature of the photographs themselves; the fact that on one set of photographs there appeared the 'Financial Times' logo".

Everyone agrees, however, that that logo was to be cut off before the photographs were used. The tribunal went on to say that the police told the FT

"it was probable that the photographs would be used at the applicant's trial for the purpose of attempting to establish where the applicant might have been at particular times and that consequently by his actions the applicant knew or ought to have known that he was bringing the respondents' names and or the name of the 'Financial Times' into disrepute, in that the facts would indicate that the specialist equipment at the 'Financial Times' was being used for the production of pornographic photographs, thus indicating either that the management connived in such activities by the staff or that the management was so lax that the staff were able to carry out this type of activity."

I do not reach that conclusion. From time to time such things happen. We all agree that they should not, but one would not necessarily conclude that the management was lax or bad or colluded with such activity. It is clear that the industrial tribunal was already moving away from deciding whether Mr. Tobitt had brought the paper into disrepute and was considering the fact that he had produced the documents. The tribunal also stated:

"We do not here think that the test is, are these photographs pornographic or obscene in contravention of any statute but what would be the reaction of a reasonable person looking at these photographs and what would he think of them. Would he consider that they are simply the ordinary sort of photographs which one can see in many newspapers these days or do they go beyond this into the realms of what

[Mr. Clive Soley]

might be described by the ordinary person as pornography? We are unanimously of the opinion that the ordinary person would describe these photographs as pornographic."

I have not seen all the photgraphs, but Mr. Tobitt accepts that one could interpret them as pornographic to some extent. One concerns a spanking scene, but I do not believe that a court of law would necessarily define spanking as pornographic. The case in the industrial tribunal, however, was that the pornographic content of the photographs was the reason for dismissal. The Minister will be aware that, in law, pornography is a much more difficult case to prove. The industrial tribunal wanted to assume that the photographs were pornographic on the basis of reasonable assessment. I cannot say for sure, but I do not believe that that would stand up in a court of law.

The FT and the industrial tribunal assumed that the police case was correct, including the use of the photographs. That assumption is one of my serious criticisms of the case. The industrial tribunal said:

"We think that the test is what would a reasonable person in the position of Messrs Gilbert and Rhodes"—

the two managers who dismissed Mr. Tobitt—

"have thought of the information which was given to them by the Sergeant in charge of the case at Walthamstow police station?"

So the industrial tribunal is saying that the information given by the prosecution mattered. At no time was any check made with the defence. In other words, the case was assumed to be proven even after it had been dismissed. That cannot be right.

Why on earth is an industrial tribunal—let alone what happened at the first hearing—and the management of the *Financial Times* asking for only the prosecution side? Does it not have a duty to ask for the defence side? Did it not have a duty to ask the solicitor and not just Mr. Tobitt, who all along was making the points that I have been making? It cannot be right to assume guilt.

To summarise my points, the *Financial Times* has brought itself into disrepute by the handling of this case. It was a disgraceful overreaction by what is, by any standard, a good newspaper. It should never have got itself into that position. It was a pathetic display of almost paranoid fear of what might be said in papers such as *The Sun* and the *Daily Mirror*. You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I would not even be here if we had such fears. Indeed, it might be said that we might be brought into disrepute if the House of Commons reacted in such a way.

An industrial tribunal must be weak in a situation in which a case is closely linked to a court case and the only contact is with the prosecution side. That is an important part of my case. It cannot be right for an industrial tribunal, a disciplinary hearing and all involved from that point of view to communicate with the prosecution but not with the defence lawyer, who deals with the case but who cannot represent the client at the tribunal because the client does not have any money.

The reason for dismissal by the industrial tribunal related only marginally to the reasons given by the *Financial Times*. It seems that the tribunal assumed, as did the *Financial Times*, that Mr. Tobitt was guilty. That was a disgraceful slur on the reputation of a man who had already suffered far more than any of us will suffer in that way in our lives. It should never be allowed to happen again.

2.51 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Patrick Nicholls): The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) will appreciate that I know much more now about his concerns, having heard his speech, than I could have known beforehand. Inevitably, in the nature of these matters, the titles of debates do not always yield up their secrets as well as they might.

The hon. Gentleman will accept that I cannot pass comment on the criminal court case to which he referred. Nor can I speak about the quality of the judgment made by the industrial tribunal. He would be the first to complain, and rightly so, if he felt that in any sense Ministers reserved unto themselves the right or privilege to go through findings made by an industrial tribunal and comment on them.

Having said that, I will respond to some of the concerns that the hon. Gentleman voiced, and it might help if I began by setting out the sequence of events as I understand them to have occurred. The hon. Gentleman spoke of the arrest and what followed. A search was made of the effects, which led the police to find the photographs in the boot of the car, and they obviously saw that some of them bore the *Financial Times* logo. Some of them had been trimmed and others had not.

At that stage, the police asked officials of the *Financial Times* to examine the photographs and, on the basis of that examination, formed the conclusion that the photographs were pornographic. Obviously, an explanation was called for from Mr. Tobitt. The police felt that an explanation was called for because it appeared that one set of photographs at least had been printed on *Financial Times* specialist equipment. That was clearly the case because they bore the FT logo.

I understand that at that stage the senior industrial relations executive and the production manager interviewed Mr. Tobitt and that, while mentioning his arrest, he did not refer to the photographs. They did not take any immediate action at that stage but told him to report for work as usual. They then themselves examined the photographs, which were still held by the police. They had a further interview with Mr. Tobitt, who at that stage was represented by his union representative, and again he did not mention the photographs.

At that stage, the FT executive and manager themselves raised the subject and, after a short adjournment, declared that they would be considering disciplinary charges, and I believe I am correct in saying that Mr. Tobbit was suspended on full pay pending a disciplinary hearing. That was conducted some days later, in accordance with the disciplinary procedures, after a full letter had been sent to Mr. Tobbit detailing the charges against him. At the disciplinary hearing, Mr. Tobitt was represented by his union. Matters were thoroughly gone into and it was decided that he should be dismissed.

I understand—this is clear from what the hon. Member for Hammersmith said—that none of those facts is in dispute. But subsequently a case for unfair dismissal was brought before the industrial tribunal on the ground that it was reasonable to dismiss him merely for producing the photographs. The respondents in the case argued that they had based their decision to dismiss him on the nature of the photographs, the fact that the *Financial Times* logo appeared on one set, their likely use in the police

proceedings and the fact that the applicant knew, or ought to have known, that his actions could bring the name of the *Financial Times* into disrepute.

I understand that the industrial tribunal agreed that the employers' action was reasonable in the circumstances and was unanimous in dismissing the applicant's case of unfair dismissal. That decision was sent to both parties on 25 January last year. As I understand it, Mr. Tobitt made no attempt after that to appeal to the employment appeal tribunal.

I should emphasise, and I am sure the hon. Gentleman will accept, that industrial tribunals are independent judicial organisations, responsible for reaching their own decisions without interference from Government. It would clearly be quite wrong for Ministers to attempt to become involved in particular cases or to try to get decisions changed.

It is not my Ministry's normal practice to comment on the merits or demerits of particular decisions. However, the hon. Gentleman was particularly concerned that the lack of representation at the hearing might have meant that Mr. Tobitt was treated unfairly. I have been through the tribunal's findings, as I am sure the hon. Gentleman has, because he has quoted from them. He will have formed his own views, but it seems to me that the tribunal was in no doubt about the decision it should make. It did not seem to dispute any of the facts as given by Mr. Tobitt, and obviously its members had to form a view.

I should emphasise two points. First, the tribunal said:

"We do not here think that the test is, are these photographs pornographic or obscene in contravention of any statute, but what would be the reaction of a reasonable person looking at these photographs and what would he think of them. Would he consider that they are simply the ordinary sort of photographs which one can see in many newspapers these days or do they go beyond this into the realms of what might be described by the ordinary person as pornography?

We are unanimously of the opinion that the ordinary person would describe these photographs as pornographic. We were originally shown only the photographs which bore the Financial Times logo but later at the request of the applicant we saw the whole set of photographs and we have no hesitation in saying that the ordinary reasonable person would describe these photographs as pornographic or, as Mr. Gilbert put it, going over the line."

Perhaps most importantly for the hon. Gentleman, the tribunal said:

"For these reasons therefore we are unanimously of the opinion that to dismiss the applicant not for the use for private purposes of the 'Financial Times' equipment but for the use for private purposes for producing pornographic photographs was a reasonable action taken by the employers and consequently the applicant's claim of unfair dismissal is dismissed."

It is not my responsibility to double-guess the decision made by the industrial tribunal. I merely say in passing that, having read the transcript, I feel that it is one of the more clear-cut cases that come before industrial tribunals. I merely hold an opinion—if the hon. Gentleman disagrees, I accept that there may be two views on it—but I believe that a common-sense view would be that using an employer's equipment to produce pornographic photographs is not the sort of action that is normally thought to be compatible with normal harmonious relationships between employers and employees.

The hon. Gentleman perfectly properly raised the issue of whether legal aid should be available in industrial tribunal cases. The hon. Gentleman knows that the idea behind industrial tribunals is that, as far as possible, they should be a quick and informal way for people to obtain redress. The Government have always felt that it is inappropriate to extend legal aid to unfair dismissal cases for precisely that reason. I might have a professional interest in this as a lawyer, but there are times when it is a good idea not to have the system gummed up by lawyers. Having realised that difficulty, the hon. Gentleman said that that should not be so where an unfair dismissal is connected with other cases, in this instance, a criminal one.

I accept—and I am sure that it will have been perfectly obvious to the House from the way the hon. Gentleman presented his constituent's case—that he knows his constituent and has talked to him. Clearly Mr. Tobitt feels badly about it, as does the hon. Gentleman. It seems clear from the tribunal's decision that it did not take into account, in a pejorative or beneficial way, the fact that there was another case pending. As I understand it, from what the hon. Gentleman said, when talking about the admissibility of the photographs the judge was referring to the earlier hearing. Even on the basis of what the hon. Gentleman says, the photographs would clearly be irrelevant to that.

The hon. Gentleman clearly feels strongly about this matter on behalf of his constituent. However, at the end of the day the industrial tribunal considered the matter, which clearly was well canvassed. The tribunal reached its decision having heard the evidence, and, however strongly the hon. Gentleman feels, it would not be appropriate for me to say whether the tribunal should have reached that decision. The tribunal took a certain view, and I do not feel that I can double-guess it.

Heliport (Cannon Street Station)

2.59 pm

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): I am grateful for the opportunity to mention the fact that a consortium of business companies wants to construct a heliport in the very heart of London—on a platform over the River Thames next to Cannon street station, halfway between St. Paul's and Southwark cathedrals, both of which ought to be havens of peace and quiet. The provost of Southwark cathedral wrote to me yesterday to say that Southwark cathedral is bang opposite the proposed site. Bang is the word. He says that his daily programme of services, concerts and conferences would be severely damaged by the noise.

Noise is the central issue. The applicants want permission at the outset for 25,000 flights per year, which is an average of over 70 per day. Twin-engined helicopters would be used, which produce more noise than single-engined helicopters, but it is not just a matter of volume measured in decibels—the character of the sound is also important. The rotor blades of helicopters make a most unpleasant high-pitched whirring sound, so that for any given volume, in both pitch and tone there is a type of vibration which is different from the noise made by winged aircraft. That noise can penetrate walls and air conditioning systems as well as windows, so double glazing is not the entire answer. It will disturb and reduce the efficiency of people working in offices. It will spoil their enjoyment of the Thames and its walkways when they are on their lunch breaks and it will affect the views of St. Paul's cathedral. The proposal is an utter disgrace to the otherwise normal and sensible people who are promoting it. It is uncivilised and wrong. It should be shot down hard, and shot down quickly.

I am concerned not only about my constituents who work in the City but because some of the helicopters might overfly Twickenham, Teddington, the Hamptons and Whitton on their way to Heathrow. That would destroy people's quiet enjoyment of their homes and gardens.

I have campaigned for years against aircraft noise and am well aware of the Government's record in this field. No Minister has done more about aircraft noise in relation to the environment than my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, first as Secretary of State for Transport and later as Secretary of State for the Environment. Following strong representations from hon. Members affected by Heathrow, he refused planning permission for the fifth terminal there, stopped the Heathrow to Gatwick helicopter link and curtailed the number of night flights allowed at Heathrow—a decision subsequently endorsed by subsequent Secretaries of State for Transport, my right hon. Friends the Members for Southend, West (Mr. Channon) and for Hertsmere (Mr. Parkinson).

I hope that my hon. Friend the Under Secretary of State for the Environment, who is to reply to the debate, can confirm that the present Secretary of State for the Environment will be just as robust in protecting my constituents and people who work in central London from the consequences of unpleasant noise as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he held that post. If so, he should prove it when he decides on the application for the heliport in question. He will have to take the decision because he has now called it in.

I remind my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport that in 1984 the then Under-Secretary of State for Transport, my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell), said in a debate on civil aviation:

> "Noise can be a potent destroyer of the quality of life. The Government care about the environment . . . Helicopters seem to have a special pitch of vibrating noise . . . in the light of the environmental disturbance caused by the service"—

he was talking about the Heathrow-Gatwick helicopter service—

> "we could not justify allowing it to continue in operation . . . we must give due weight to environmental considerations in dealing with such cases."—[*Official Report*, 22 June 1984; Vol. 62, c. 655.]

Of course, that followed the completion of the M25 motorway, which linked Heathrow and Gatwick. Now that a fast train is to run from Heathrow to Paddington, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister can confirm—I gave him notice of this question—that it remains Government policy to uphold the principles set out by the former Minister in 1984.

The decision is to be made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. Because of my right hon. Friend's quasi-judicial responsibilities, I realise that my hon. Friend the Minister cannot comment on the planning merits as that would anticipate any decision that my right hon. Friend might take. However, I ask him to confirm that he will take note of all the points raised in the debate, not only because they will come out at the public inquiry, but because there is considerable parliamentary opinion on this matter. That is not surprising as the Select and Standing Committee Rooms of both Houses face the Thames and risk being disturbed by the noise of helicopters flying along the river to a heliport in the Pool of London.

I draw my hon. Friend's attention to early-day motion 753, which has been signed by 23 right hon. and hon. Members from both sides of the House. Although, in essence, it asked for the decision on the planning application to be called in, which has since happened, it also expressed views and attitudes on the planning merits, such as the environment, the noise, the views of St. Paul's, public transport safety on the adjacent railway at Cannon street station and safety on the river and for residents throughout London. There is thus considerable parliamentary opinion, which I hope the Department will take into account when weighing up the relevant planning aspects as on planning grounds it is obliged to do.

The site for the heliport falls within the constituency of the City of London and Westminster, South, which is represented by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. He is precluded from speaking in the debate because if he did he would be deemed to be giving advice to another Minister on a departmental matter falling within the ambit of that second Minister. However, I am aware that he has visited the site and it is open to him to put the various views of his constituents to our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

The site is on the edge of the City of London. Although the Secretary of State's decision to call in the planning decision means that the Government will make the final decision, the Corporation of London will still have an important role in the forthcoming planning inquiry. I understand that members of the corporation are likely to be divided on the matter, both in the planning committee and in the full corporation. If so, I hope that any division

will be reported to the inquiry and to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. The Corporation of London will not be taking an executive decision as a planning authority —it will merely advise, and if that advice is divided, it makes sense for that fact to be conveyed to those making the decision.

The application is opposed by the following boroughs: Southwark, which faces the site, Richmond upon Thames, which includes my constituency, Wandsworth, Tower Hamlets and the City of Westminster. I hope that my hon. Friend will note that those five local authorities have different political complexions.

The application is also opposed by six City livery companies, numerous residents' associations and several important companies which have offices in the vicinity where many people do important work. For example, British Telecom has its international nerve centre nearby. It would be a great pity if its work were jeopardised either by noise or by the risk of a crash. Barclays de Zoete Wedd would also be affected. Here I must declare an interest as I am on the list of the shareholders of Barclays bank, although my interest is not beneficial but as a trustee of a trust. It has many people who do important and useful work. Speyhawk could also be affected. That company is well known to me because 15 years ago its headquarters were in Twickenham and the quality of its work enjoys tremendous respect. It would be shocking if what it is doing to develop Cannon street were marred by thousands of helicopters flying over Cannon street station. Today I received a message from the chairman of Speyhawk, Mr. Trevor Osborne, who said:

"A heliport in this location would be environmentally damaging and contrary to the tremendous improvements to the character of this riverside location which have taken place in recent years and are taking place even now."

He went on to say:

"The area around the proposed site has rapidly become a financial centre of considerable commercial importance which could be spoilt by the nuisance of an inappropriate development".

The site is next to Cannon street station and I must draw attention to the safety risks. Helicopters are becoming less safe. A report in *Flight International* for the week 7-13 February 1990 quotes the Civil Aviation Authority as saying:

"The encouraging [helicopter-safety] trend of the past couple of years has now been reversed."

The number of helicopter crashes is unfortunately tending to increase and it would be batty to have a heliport next to a main commuter railway station where a crashing helicopter might derail a train or even drop on a platform crowded with commuters.

It would be bad to set a precedent to build out into the River Thames. English Heritage and the Services Committee of the House had some strong words to say on a recent planning application for some floating pontoons with shops alongside Westminster pier, jutting out just to the north of Westminster bridge and facing County Hall. Their advice was taken by the Secretary of State for the Environment following the planning inquiry and planning permission was refused. Platforms and other works jutting out into the Thames would create a bad precedent. Furthermore, it would be bad for the work of the House to have large numbers of helicopters going by.

There are only two arguments in favour of the proposal —the usual commercial one, and the fact that each trip would save a few business tycoons about half an hour.

I hope that the public inquiry will scrutinise with the utmost scepticism the argument that a heliport would benefit the City of London as a financial centre. The noise would cut the efficiency of people working in offices nearby. No other European city has a central heliport—unless one counts the heliport at Issy, which is as far from the commercial centre of Paris as the existing Battersea heliport is from the City of London.

I happen to know a number of successful business men as well as some who are unsuccessful. Some dash about to offices and plants in different places, while others are the quiet type of millionaires who work from one point. Most tend to be sensible and reasonable people who take carefully measured decisions. That is especially true of the more successful among them. In general, they do not need or want to disturb thousands of people on the ground just to save themselves half-an-hour's travelling time. It is the second-rate businesss men—the grade 2 and grade 3 busines men—who are much more likely to rush about like scalded rabbits and would want to brag to their children, or possibly to their girl friends, that they have been up in a helicopter. The demand may be there, but the need is not.

It is for the Government to decide what is right. Usually, the Secretary of State for the Environment can accept the advice of his planning inspectors, but sometimes he does not. If my hon. Friend the Minister has time, perhaps he will tell me the percentage of cases falling into each of those categories. I can give three prominent examples of an Environment Secretary refusing to accept the advice of inspectors following planning inquiries.

The first concerns the fifth terminal at Heathrow, where a public inquiry lasted two years. The inspector—a distinguished barrister—recommended that a fifth terminal be constructed. I am glad that the then Secretary of State for Transport, my right hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley), chose to heed the advice of Members of Parliament representing constituencies in the Heathrow area rather than that of the inspector, and refused permission for the scheme to go ahead. My right hon. Friend made that decision on planning grounds, giving different weights to the various arguments from those assigned by the inspector.

The second case was the extension to the National gallery. After the Prince of Wales had described the proposed scheme as

"a monstrous carbuncle on the face of a well-loved friend",

the then Secretary of State refused planning consent.

The third case was the reverse. The planning inspector had recommended refusal, as had Richmond borough council, of the scheme to construct a Sainsbury superstore which is to open to the public on Tuesday 29 May. That planning decision placed in the hands of a local charity, Hampton Fuel Allotments Trust, the sum of £21 million for the land, so what had been a relatively small village charity suddenly has an income of £1·5 million per year for the benefit of my constituents. I believe that most of my constituents are glad about that decision, just as they are about those relating to Heathrow and the National gallery.

Very often, when a Secretary of State for the Environment refuses the advice of planning inspectors, his decision is right not only politically but in terms of value judgments and planning considerations. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has in the forefront of his mind the fact that, whatever a planning inspector recommends, he is no more than an adviser—albeit a distinguished adviser. Ultimately it is for the Secretary of

[Mr. Toby Jessel]

State to reach a judgment, and it would be wrong for him ever to sacrifice his judgment to that of a planning inspector.

I hope that when the planning inquiry takes place it will not be too long before the inspector reports to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, who will consider the matter carefully, and that he will refuse planning permisson for this frightful application.

3.19 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Colin Moynihan): I can respond immediately to the last matter that my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) brought to my attention. I have the details that he requested. The chief inspector's report for the year ending March 1989 shows that the Secretary of State did not accept the inspector's recommendations in nine cases out of 100. My hon. Friend was therefore accurate when he mentioned the principle that the honorary advice received from inspectors following inquiries is further considered by the Secretary of State, who has to determine the outcome of any such appeal and does not need to accept that advice automatically. Nevertheless, the inspectorate is of first-rate quality and we are fortunate to have people with such first-rate minds applying themselves to problems which are often complex.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham on winning his place in the ballot. As he said, the planning application for a heliport alongside Cannon street railway bridge was called in by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment on 22 March, and a public inquiry is to be held before one of his inspectors, starting on 2 October.

The City of London Heliport Ltd. (CLH), a consortium which includes BAA, Hanson, Midland bank, Trafalgar House and the Carroll group of companies, submitted a planning application to the City of London on 12 December for a heliport. The proposal is to locate the heliport on the north bank of the Thames between London bridge and Cannon street railway bridge. The heliport would be cantilevered out over the river, and the deck would be slightly above the level of London and Cannon street bridges. The application provides for a maximum of 25,000 movements per annum, equating to approximately 91 a day. The application is accompanied by an environmental impact assessment, which covers such issues as noise, safety, water quality and cultural heritage.

The proposed heliport would be restricted to certain twin-engined helicopters, as my hon. Friend has pointed out. That is to ensure that, should a helicopter suffer an engine failure, it will be more able to land safely. That is required to satisfy the requirements of the Civil Aviation Authority in respect of an elevated heliport such as CLH.

Mr. Jessel: Does that not imply that there is a conflict between safety and noise abatement? To make the heliport safer, helicopters will have to have an extra engine which will make them more noisy. One way or another, the public will suffer—either from more noise or from less safety.

Mr. Moynihan: I make no qualitative judgment—it is for the inspector to consider noise and the important issue of safety.

At present the Department has received 223 representations, including 10 from local authorities. They are split fairly evenly between those in favour and those against. It appears that the arguments have fined down to the important questions that my hon. Friend has raised —noise and safety, versus need for the heliport. That is borne out by the representations received so far.

In the first instance, the application was made to the corporation of the City. The Government's policy is not to interfere with the jurisdiction of the local planning authority unless it is necessary to do so, to be very selective about calling in cases for the Secretary of State to decide, and generally to call in applications only if planning issues of more than local importance are involved—for example, those which in the Department's opinion could have side effects beyond their immediate locality, could give rise to substantial regional or national controversy, might conflict with national policy on important matters, or could involve interests of national security or of foreign Governments.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State decided that this was such a case, and that he should take the decision himself after a public inquiry. He will consider all planning aspects of the proposed development, and he has said that on the information so far available the following matters appear likely to be relevant to his consideration of the application: first, the provisions of the local plan adopted on 12 January 1989 so far as material to the application; secondly, the effects of noise and pollution arising from the proposed development; thirdly, the suitability of the site for the proposed development; fourthly, the effect of the development on the character of the area; and, fifthly, the likely effect of the development on traffic movement in nearby streets. Clearly, the important issue of safety is relevant to some of those considerations.

The inquiry will be held at the City of London Corporation Guildhall at 10 am on Tuesday 2 October 1990. The inspector will be Mr. Brundel. The inquiry will provide the opportunity for all those concerned to put their views to the inspector, and the best course is to attend or to be represented there. Interested persons may give evidence at the discretion of the inspector. Those wishing to give evidence are advised to attend on the first morning of the inquiry to assist the inspector in determining the order of appearance.

A pre-inquiry meeting is to be held at the same venue at 10 am on Tuesday 31 July. The purpose of the meeting is to help the parties prepare for the actual inquiry and so enable the proceedings to be conducted as smoothly and efficiently as possible. It will also help the parties to concentrate on the main issues in dispute, saving time and expense for all concerned. It is not for the purpose of hearing evidence, which is for the inquiry itself.

The Government recognise the need to balance environmental concerns with aviation interests.

My hon. Friend appreciates that I cannot comment on the merits of the case. As he rightly stated, that might prejudice my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's quasi-judicial role. However, on the most important point I can say that his views will be carefully noted by both my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Transport.

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Does the hon. Member for Chichester (Mr. Nelson) have the consent of the hon. Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel)?

Mr. Jessel: If there is time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I have further points to put to my hon. Friend the Minister.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the hon. Member for Twickenham objecting to the hon. Member for Chichester?

Mr. Jessel: I am not objecting, but I thought——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I call Mr. Toby Jessel.

Mr. Jessel: My hon. Friend the Minister has not so far had time to answer one of the points that I put to him. I should be grateful if he would find the time to do so, as we have approximately three and three quarter minutes left.

I gave my hon. Friend the Minister notice of this matter by telephoning his private secretary or another official in the Department of the Environment who was in touch with his private secretary this morning. I refer to an extract from the debate on civil aviation as reported in the *Official Report* of 22 June 1984. My hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West (Sir D. Mitchell) was the then Minister who replied to the debate. As I said 20 minutes ago, my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West said:

"Noise can be a potent destroyer of the quality of life. The Government care about the environment . . . Helicopters seem to have a special pitch of vibrating noise . . . In the light of the environmental disturbance caused by the service we could not justify allowing it to continue in operation . . . we must give due weight to environmental considerations in dealing with such cases.—[*Official Report*, 22 June 1984; Vol. 62, c. 655.]

The official to whom I spoke assured me that it would be possible for the Department of the Environment to locate a copy of the *Official Report* of 22 June 1984 and place it before my hon. Friend the Minister. I do not know whether that happened. Will my hon. Friend the Minister say whether the sentiments in the speech by the then Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, North-West, remain Government policy? It is crucial to this matter. The Minister can comment without prejudicing the Secretary of State's decision at the public inquiry. It is merely an expression of Government policy, but it is important for me to know. I feel that I have the right, on behalf of my constituents, to ask whether the notion of not allowing the Heathrow to Gatwick helicopter link to continue because of the exceptional environmental disturbance of helicopter noise remains Government policy.

Mr. Moynihan: I have not seen that speech, but I will respond to my hon. Friend and ensure that he has a detailed answer in writing. If it is not directly relevant in terms of pre-empting or prejudging the specific issue to be considered by the inquiry, the reply will made available to him in the usual manner through my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

3.30 pm

Mr. Anthony Nelson (Chichester): In the dying moments of the debate, may I, with the permission of my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel), say a few words in favour of the proposals? I should regret it if the opinion were to be put about that the House was universally against them. There are strong arguments why a heliport is essential for the City of London to retain its pre-eminent position as a financial centre, and I hope that British Telecom——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, Before I put the question, I express the hope that all hon. Members and those who serve us will have an enjoyable and relaxing recess.

It being half-past Three o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House, without Question put, pursuant to the Order [11 May] and the Resolution [23 May] till Tuesday 5 June.*

House of Commons

Tuesday 5 June 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

HEALTH

Cancelled Operations

1. **Mr. Maples:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the maximum and minimum number of operating theatre sessions cancelled by district health authorities last year.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): Four districts reported no cancelled scheduled operating theatre sessions in 1988-89 and one reported just over 2,000 cancelled sessions.

Mr. Maples: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his appointment. Does he agree that the figures that he has just given show yet again that there are enormous discrepancies in the performances of different health authorities? Does he further agree that if only the less efficient could improve their performance, they could deliver far more health care for the same amount of money?

Mr. Dorrell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his good wishes. He made a good point. Both the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee have pointed out the enormous discrepancy within health districts in the efficient use of operating theatres. The Bevan report shows that across the country the average utilisation is 70 per cent. If that were raised to 90 per cent., there would be a saving to the National Health Service of £100 million. The reforms that we intend to introduce next April will help to achieve that.

Rev. Martin Smyth: What steps are being taken to increase the average utilisation figure? Would improved information technology help, especially when patients do not turn up or when notes are not available to the surgeon carrying out the operation?

Mr. Dorrell: Improved technology certainly has a part to play and our response to the Bevan report recognises that. We are currently consulting on the lessons to be learnt from that report and we expect to issue guidance soon.

Dame Jill Knight: Was not there a recent case of an ophthalmic surgeon working in the Health Service carrying out more operations in one month than another ophthalmic surgeon carried out in six months? Do not NHS patients have the right to expect unanimity of good service, wherever they may live? Is not that the most important reason for the review of the NHS?

Mr. Dorrell: During my three and a half weeks in the job, that specific case has not been drawn to my attention. However, the principle espoused by my hon. Friend is right. We are introducing reforms next April to try to achieve that unanimity of service throughout the country.

Community Care

2. **Mr. Bell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on earmarked grants to local authorities for the purpose of community care.

11. **Mr. Harry Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on earmarked grants to local authorities for the purpose of community care.

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): Local authorities are responsible for determining the use of the resources on matters for which they have policy responsibility and for which they are accountable. The House welcomed the Government's decision to make community care the prime responsibility of local government, and earmarked grants would be inconsistent with that decision.

Mr. Bell: I am sorry to hear the Secretary of State's response, although I am not surprised by it. Is he aware of the anxiety throughout social services departments that there will not be sufficient grant to meet the demand for community care? Is he further aware of the London Research Centre report, published in April, which suggested that there would be a shortfall of £100 million rising to £500 million by 1994? Will he consider specific grants to meet such shortfalls, should they arise?

Mr. Clarke: We have always made it clear that local authorities need, and will receive, adequate resources to carry out their new responsibilities. Those resources will be decided during the public expenditure round. It is rather premature to produce reports, from any source, about the inadequacy of resources before we have even decided what those resources will be.

One difficulty with earmarked grants is that it is impossible to separate that area of expenditure from what is already being spent on care in the community, which in large part is already a local authority responsibility. I remind the hon. Gentleman that while the Government have been in power total spending on care in the community has risen by 68 per cent. in real terms—that is more than half as much again as was being spent when we took office and before we introduced our popular arrangements.

Mr. Harry Barnes: On 6 December the former junior Minister made a speech of glowing support for community care when he addressed the annual general meeting of the National Schizophrenia Fellowship. Is not it a cruel deception of such bodies that there is a distinction between the Government's aims and the methods that they use? Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept that earmarked grants should be available to areas such as north Derbyshire so that they can meet the provisions referred to in Government statements?

Mr. Clarke: My junior Ministers move on to greater things so rapidly that I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman is referring to a speech made by my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Home Office or my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport, but if he was addressing the National Schizophrenia Fellowship I have no doubt that the reference was, above all, to the specific grant that we have made it clear that we shall be introducing to encourage community care for mentally ill people. A specific grant for that area is important because in the past it has not been given high enough priority by local authorities. Therefore, money aimed specifically at mental illness will be allocated to local authorities when they produce plans that are satisfactory to the health authorities.

Mr. Sims: Will my right hon. and learned Friend comfirm that, whether earmarked or not, grants given to local authorities from next April will represent the sums that hitherto would have been paid in social security benefits? Is he yet able to give the formula by which the figures will be calculated or an estimate of the sum involved? I am sure that he appreciates the difficulties of local authorities in making their plans from next April without knowing what resources will be available to them.

Mr. Clarke: We are firmly committed to transferring from the Department of Social Security vote to our vote and to local government the sum of money that would have been spent by the Department of Social Security under the old policy of making provision through income support for people in residential care. We also have to make a calculation for growth and a calculation of what is available for this year, and we shall do that when we make the decision on the revenue support grant for local government. I appreciate the difficulties for local government in having to make plans when final decisions have not been reached on exactly how much will be available next year, but that is inescapable in the system of annual financial planning that we have always had. It is true of the whole range of government, under this Government or any other, that we have to wait for the autumn spending round before we know exactly how much we have for the next year. Neither the Treasury and Civil Service Committee nor anybody else has yet come up with a better way of doing it.

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: Has my right hon. and learned Friend had a chance to consider the sad and moving story that appeared in the *Nottingham Evening Post* last Friday about Colin Jago, a schizophrenia sufferer, who slipped so tragically through the community care net? Will he have a look at that story to see whether any lessons can be learnt for our policy on care in the community?

Mr. Clarke: I agree that the story of Colin Jago is tragic. It shows what a dreadful way of life he led as a result of suffering from schizophrenia. I shall ask the chairman of the district health authority to let me have a report on his case to see whether there are any lessons to be learnt.

Mr. Allen: That is sheer hypocrisy. The Secretary of State is allowing the mental illness unit for adolescents to close.

Mr. Clarke: Before the hon. Gentleman stoops any further to try to make party political points out of a tragic individual case—

Mr. Allen: It is hypocrisy.

Mr. Clarke: People must make their own judgment about where hypocrisy lies in the matter, and loud-mouthed barracking does not help.

I should point out to my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) that Colin Jago was examined and interviewed by a doctor at Mapperley hospital, who decided that it was not necessary to admit him to hospital for treatment. However, we must discover the full facts to see whether there are any lessons to be learnt from Mr. Jago's sad death.

Mr. Robin Cook: Will the Secretary of State acknowledge that Sir Roy Griffiths recommended an earmarked grant, that the local authorities, including the Conservative ones, want an earmarked grant, and that now the other place has voted for it? Even flagship Wandsworth has made representations to the Secretary of State supporting the case for a ring-fenced grant. Why does he disagree with everybody else if it is not that he is afraid that an earmarked grant will make it only too plain that he cannot come up with the cash that the councils need to make care in the community work?

Mr. Clarke: Because good government depends on clear responsibility and accountability, and I have not been persuaded that it is right to give responsibility for this matter to local government and then for the House or any Government to try to keep to themselves part of the responsibility for determining the level of resources. No one in Wandsworth or anywhere else would want the Government to determine the total level of resources available. There is also a practical problem with an earmarked grant. I do not understand how it is proposed to distinguish the earmarked grant, made with whatever new money we might make available, from all the moneys already being spent on care in the community by local government, which already provides home helps, meals on wheels, and so on. I do not believe that it is practicable and nor, for the reasons that I have given, am I persuaded that it is desirable.

Social Workers

3. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to assist in the recruitment of local authority social workers.

The Minister for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): It is for local authorities themselves, as employers, to take whatever steps are appropriate to recruit the staff whom they need.

Mr. Worthington: Did the Minister hear the Prime Minister praising the work of child helplines the other day, when she said that we must make sure that enough telephones are provided and that sufficient volunteers are available to man them? Is not it a little hypocritical of the Prime Minister to make that remark when the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work states that an extra 800 social workers need to be trained each year to maintain the present level of services?

Mrs. Bottomley: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was praising the work of Childline, which uses volunteers and provides an excellent service. We pay £300,000 towards the cost of that service. The CCETSW has responsibility for training, and we have substantially increased its funding. There are significantly more people —about 4·5 per cent. more—joining the profession each year than leaving it. Of course, we continue to have discussions with employers and with the CCETSW to ensure that there is an adequate supply of social workers to undertake important tasks, in addition to the volunteers to whom the hon. Gentleman referred.

Mr. Dickens: Does my hon. Friend agree that social services recruits not only need university degrees or to be armed with diplomas in humanities but should be streetwise? Would not it be a good idea to recruit mothers whose children have grown up—and perhaps even younger grandmothers—because such women have raised families, are streetwise, and are not as green as grass?

Mrs. Bottomley: I entirely support my hon. Friend. In my view, streetwise grandmothers are precisely the people who should be undertaking work with young families. The work that we do in training social workers ensures broad entry. It is not the case that it is only 18 or 19-year-old undergraduates whom we want to attract. We seek to recruit also the mature woman who has experience. I shall certainly bear in mind my hon. Friend's words when I next meet those responsible.

Health Care, Nottingham

4. **Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he next plans to visit Strelley health centre, Nottingham to discuss standards of health care.

Mr. Dorrell: I have no plans to visit Strelley health centre at present.

Mr. Allen: Is the Minister aware that there is great concern at Strelley and other health centres about the Government's policy on preventive medicine? Is he further aware that 2·5 million fewer people have received free eye tests than in the previous year? Eye tests can detect serious illnesses such as cancer and kidney disease, and other conditions. Will the Minister admit at the Dispatch Box, on his first day in the job, that it was a terrible mistake to charge people for eye tests that were previously free?

Mr. Dorrell: No, I am unaware of any of those things. The hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to represent his arguments in tomorrow's debate. I have not the slightest doubt that my hon. Friend the Minister for Health, who is replying to that debate, will be able to knock the hon. Gentleman out of the water.

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: My hon. Friend the Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell) is almost the local Member of Parliament concerned, and I am sure that he agrees that his constituents and mine receive excellent service under the National Health Service provision in the city of Nottingham. Does my hon. Friend the Minister agree that health centres are growing not only in number but in excellence? I ask him to join in paying tribute to the chairman of the district health authority, Mr. David White, and to all those involved in Health Service provision in the city of Nottingham.

Mr. Dorrell: I join my hon. Friend in congratulating Mr. White. As he said, my constituents also benefit from the considerable improvement in health care made over the past few years in Nottingham. The city has two major general hospitals, and has seen a 9·2 per cent. increase in direct care staff in the Health Service over the past five years. It has also seen a 22 per cent. increase in in-patient cases and a 22 per cent. fall in the average general practitioners' list. That is an enormous improvement in health care in Nottingham, from which my constituents, among others, benefit.

Community Health Councils

5. **Mr. Hood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the future of community health councils.

Mr. Dorrell: We have no plans to alter the role of community health councils.

Mr. Hood: Has the Minister read the leaked letter—published in the National Union of Public Employees journal recently—from the Secretary of State for Social Security, which showed that the answer given to the House is not as accurate as suggested? The letter states that it is the Government's intention to do away with the right of community health councils to complain about such things as hospitals opting out. If that is the case, will the Minister admit it, and if it is not, will he officially deny it? Consumers of health care are getting sick of their democratic rights being taken away.

Mr. Dorrell: I am afraid that I am not an avid reader of the NUPE journal, but I can confirm that no change is envisaged for the role of the community health council when a district health authority proposes the closure of a hospital.

Mr. Nelson: I welcome the reassurance that my hon. Friend has given, but will he reflect on the fact that while community health councils can be a useful sound-board for local opinion on the health services that are provided, it is the membership of the health authority that has executive control over local allocation of resources? A key issue in future is to try to ensure that the range of authority members and their responsiveness to local opinion is such that they can bring influence to bear and reflect public opinion in the provision of health services.

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend is right to say that the changes that will be introduced next April are intended to emphasise the executive nature of health authorities. That leaves an important role for the community health councils. In many ways it will be an enhanced role after April. It creates the opportunity for them to become more concerned with the development of the service in the area for which they are responsible.

Ms. Harman: Will the Minister publish for the relevant community health council any draft business plan that has been submitted to his Department or any draft application for self-governing trust status? Will he also publish for the relevant community health council a copy of his Department's response to any such draft papers, to ensure that the council is effectively able to represent local opinion when a hospital in its area is deciding whether to opt out?

Mr. Dorrell: I shall not undertake to publish draft business plans, but I give the undertaking, which my right hon. and learned Friend has given many times, that the community health councils will be fully consulted on any proposal to establish a self-governing trust.

Mr. Conway: Will community health councils be able to do much that Members of Parliament who are active in their constituencies cannot do? Given that circumstance, does my hon. Friend think that if the councils did not exist at this time tomorrow, they would be missed, or that they are much loved?

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend is an active Member of Parliament. If everyone was as active as him, he might have a point. Community health councils have a significant part to play in the future of the Health Service, by representing proper concerns when major changes are envisaged and as a consultee in the future development of the Health Service. I hope that in future the councils, in the same way as other bodies are concerned with health issues, will be more interested in output by the Health Service than in input.

NHS Trusts

6. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on how many ballots have been held in hospitals which are considering opting out; and whether any of these have shown a majority in favour of such a course of action.

7. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence he has of the views of National Health Service staff or patients on the formation of self-governing trusts.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No Government have ever thought it sensible for changes in management of NHS services to be subject to ballots. Applications for NHS trust status will not be invited until Parliament has approved the necessary legislation. Staff and members of the public will then have an opportunity to express their views on individual proposals before any decisions are taken. I prefer the usual process of consultation rather than public referendum on such complicated and specialist issues.

A total of 195 units have so far expressed an interest in NHS trust status, with some 80 stating that they may seek trust status in 1991. That demonstrates the keen interest with which senior NHS staff, including members of the medical and nursing profession, view the prospect of establishing NHS trusts.

Mrs. Ewing: In the light of that response, will the Secretary of State tell us the definition of the electorate when such decisions are reached? Surely all categories of staff and existing, past and potential patients must be involved in the decisions as well as the community health councils, which have already been referred to. Has he established any criteria on which he will say no?

Mr. Clarke: Of course, the staff of the National Health Service are a key part of it. They deliver the service and we depend on their dedication. However, we have never operated any type of worker control and the public have an interest in those matters as well. The founding of the National Health Service was not made subject to local ballots and I can recall no change in the 40 years since then that has been made in that way. We shall have a full process of consultation and I will refuse applications unless I am satisfied from all the information that comes in from the consultation that, if granted, a particular application will lead to a better quality of service for patients in that hospital and better value for money for all those interested in the National Health Service.

Mr. McAllion: Is the Secretary of State aware that in ballots held across the country, huge majorities have been returned that are opposed to hospitals opting out of the National Health Service? Is he further aware that almost every organisation connected with the National Health Service—the Health Service trade unions, the community health councils, Health Service charities and voluntary organisations—is equally opposed to hospitals being allowed to opt out of the National Health Service? As the Health Service belongs to the people, why does not the Minister let the people decide by ensuring that there are ballots in every area affected before any hospital is allowed to opt out of the Health Service?

Mr. Clarke: I am against any hospital opting out of the National Health Service. If people go round asking daft questions, they get daft answers, which is not a very positive contribution to running a better National Health Service. We shall have a full process of public consultation on what local people are proposing in the places that go ahead with an application for NHS trust status. The Labour party is bereft of any serious contributions. Instead of putting forward its own ideas on how we might go back to more local discretion and control in running the Health Service, it leaves the whole matter to the ridiculous local ballots being run by councils, unions and other people.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Will my right hon. and learned Friend admit to the House that the drive for NHS self-governing status comes from his Department through the chairmen of the regions and the chairmen of the districts, all of whom are party political appointments? Will he state genuinely to the House that if it is the view of local people, and especially if it is the view of consultants, doctors, nurses and paramedics working in a hospital, that they do not wish to go for self-governing status, he will refuse that application?

Mr. Clarke: I do not only not admit, but I strongly deny my hon. Friend's allegation and his ridiculous travesty of our appointment process—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Clarke: If the appointments were party political, I should have complaints from the Opposition about them. The applications for self-governing status are coming from people concerned with the hospitals and units themselves. It is rather absurd that when, in effect, we go back to a system very similar to the old hospital management boards, which gives back far more local control at the sharp end of delivery over how the Service is run, we are opposed in this way. I well remember the Labour party fiercely fighting the establishment of the district health authorities and the regional health authorities, which it now says should run the Service. Eighteen years ago, the Labour party argued vehemently that it was wrong to take away local control of hospitals. I have undergone a

conversion in those 18 years and I am inclined to think that the Labour party was right. The trouble is that the Labour party just opposes any change at any moment.

Mr. Winterton: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I asked a question and the Minister did not——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order. If the hon. Gentleman were asking to raise the matter on the Adjournment, that would be different.

Mr. Dykes: Will my right hon. and learned Friend— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us settle down, please.

Mr. Dykes: On a calmer note, does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that if there is a proposal for a management area change and then the idea of a self-governing trust, it could cause extra delays, and that, if there is an erosion of services and facilities, as at the Royal National Orthopaedic hospital, there is a danger of that hospital's future being severely threatened? Will my right hon. and learned Friend pay attention to that and say what he intends to do about it and when our colleague the Minister for Health will visit the hospital?

Mr. Clarke: I have visited that hospital and I certainly recommend my hon. Friend the Minister for Health to visit it if she has the opportunity. I understand the need to resolve some of the uncertainties surrounding the future of the Royal National Orthopaedic hospital. I shall certainly ensure, and I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister of Health will too, that nothing connected with NHS reforms causes further delay or creates fresh difficulties for all those who work in that excellent hospital.

Mr. Robin Cook: Does not the Secretary of State recognise that he could sidestep all questions on local ballots if he would simply agree to a timetable that first put the proposals to the general electorate so that electors who had no opportunity to comment in the last election will have an opportunity to vote on them in the next one? I warn the Secretary of State that, if he persists in bulldozing through the proposals for opt-out without giving local people any voice, the next Labour Government will take back all those hospitals into local health authority control.

Mr. Clarke: I have had a look at the draft manifesto that the Labour party prepared for the next election. It seems to be so vague on management issues that I came to the view that it was voting to make no changes in particular to whatever it inherited if and when it got back into power. I am absolutely astonished that the hon. Gentleman is now committing himself to making no changes to the way in which the National Health Service is run, without submitting any proposals that he might have for local ballots in the future. If we ever had a Labour Government, it might reduce the dangers of dangerous action, but I do not think that a Labour Government would adopt such a foolish process.

Mr. Rowe: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that a growing number of senior doctors, nurses and paramedics in the two district health authorities in my area are growing increasingly excited at the thought that they may have an opportunity to shorten the administrative hierarchy that constantly second-guesses their judgments, frequently to their detriment?

Mr. Clarke: I am interested to hear what my hon. Friend says. I know that quite a lot of those who are interested in NHS trust status are, among other things, looking forward to being free of the day-to-day control of their district, region or other parts of the system. There certainly is widespread enthusiasm. I disapprove of all the ballots, whatever the electorate is. It is a selective way of looking at the interests of everybody who has a common interest in the NHS—it does not belong to the staff. So far, five of the ballots among consultants have been in favour and seven have been against. I hope that everybody will wait until they have a proper application and then go through a sensible process of consultation, making whatever representations they want. That will enable me to make a better-informed judgment in the end, which is in the interests of the Health Service and its patients.

Dental Checks

8. **Mr. Rees:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will now remove the charge on dental checks.

16. **Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will now remove the charge on dental checks.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I see no reason to do so. It is right that adults who can afford to do so should make a contribution to this part of their dental care.

Mr. Rees: Are not dental checks an important part of preventive medicine? Has the Secretary of State noticed that independent research shows that the number of dental checks is falling? Although that may save money, is not it bad for the health of Government policy?

Mr. Clarke: I think that dental checks are important, which is why I think that those who can afford to do so will willingly pay £3·45 for a dental check. The right hon. Gentleman is aware that 40 per cent. of the population is exempt from any charge. I know of no evidence of a sustained decline in the number of dental checks. Indeed, over any lengthy period, there has been a steady increase in the number of dental checks and in the total number of dental treatments in the National Health Service.

Mrs. Peacock: Will my right hon. and learned Friend encourage the dental practice board to make available treatment under the EC 18 certificate? I understand that recently the board was denied all knowledge of it and that therefore some patients have been paying for their treatment.

Mr. Clarke: I am not aware of those problems. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for drawing them to my attention. I shall take up the matter with the dental health board and let my hon. Friend have a written response to her question.

Mr. Kennedy: Further to the answer to the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees), the right hon. and learned Gentleman cannot have been talking to dentists, because all the dental surgeons to whom I have spoken over the past few months have said clearly that only people in two income categories can afford a full, prolonged and comprehensive system of dental care—those on full state benefits who do not have to pay and those in an income category such that they can afford to pay—and that the bulk of people, who fall somewhere between the two, are cutting their dental

treatment because of the cost. How can the Secretary of State deduce from that that there is no downturn in preventive medicine?

Mr. Clarke: Of course, similar representations are made to me by dentists whenever dental charges are raised generally, in line with the longstanding policy of this Government and of previous Labour Governments. However, it is clear that over any sustained period there has been a steady increase in the number of dental treatments given under the National Health Service. Over a lengthy period I expect to see a continued and satisfactory level of dental check-ups. I do not believe that for the 60 per cent. of the population who are asked to pay, £3·45 is a deterrent charge for a perfectly reasonable part of any individual's preventive medicine—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I appeal to hon. Members to listen to the questions and not to conduct private conversations, which is disruptive.

Mr. John Greenway: Is not it true that the new dental contract will, for the first time, pay dentists a fee for the regular patients on their list, without requiring any contribution from the patients? Although it is understandable that dentists feel some concern about the details, does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that a positive vote from dentists in the forthcoming ballot on the new contract would be a vote for prevention and would provide a much-needed shift in emphasis towards better dental health?

Mr. Clarke: Yes, I agree. The new contract will enable dentists to offer patients all-round continuing care, including emergency cover, treatment plans, better information and the replacement, free of charge, of certain restorations that fail within 12 months, and so on. I have agreed the new contract with the dentists' representatives and they are commending it to their members. I very much hope that the dentists will vote in favour of the new contract, which represents a substantial improvement in our dental services, for which many dentists have been pressing for many years.

Mr. Tom Clarke: How can the right hon. and learned Gentleman tell the House that there is no evidence of a decline when the Minister for Health told the House in February that there had been a slight dip and when in May his Department reported a reduction of 700,000 cases, thus bucking the upward trend throughout Europe? Does the Secretary of State accept that he has got his figures wrong and will he go back and do his homework—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but will hon. Members, especially those below the Gangway, desist from conducting private conversations, which are very disruptive?

Mr. Tom Clarke: Does the Secretary of State accept that he has plainly got his figures—and his policies—wrong?

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: There was a dip, but I referred to long-term trends. There is always a dip—I have no doubt that this was the case when the Labour Government were in power—when charges are increased for any part of NHS services. However, over the years, the dips are not sustained. I repeat that I do not believe that £3·45 is a deterrent charge for the 60 per cent. of the population who are liable to pay the charge, and nor do I believe that any evidence will be forthcoming to demonstrate that it is.

Cottage Hospitals

9. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what policy changes his Department has instituted during the last six months with regard to cottage hospitals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: There has been no change in the position. It is for health authorities to determine the pattern of services in their own locality.

Mr. Wigley: Is the Minister aware of the comments by the Secretary of State on 10 October when he said that the Government's new funding arrangements would ensure that

"popular cottage hospitals will thrive"?

As there are now six small cottage hospitals under the axe for closure in my county, will the hon. Gentleman confirm whether that is because a different policy is being pursued in Wales or because there has been a change of policy in the Department of Health, which means that such hospitals in England are in as much danger as are those in Wales?

Mr. Dorrell: No, Sir. There has been no change of policy. The same policy is pursued in Wales and England. The policy is to allow greater delegation of decision-making to local level. Where there is a genuine and sustained local demand for a community hospital, that will be seen in the purchasing decisions taken from next April onwards.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: Does my hon. Friend agree that the cottage hospital provides a signal service in rural areas, especially where travelling distances are great? Does he recognise that there is a feeling in the southern part of my constituency that Herefordshire district health authority is being frustrated in its attempt to redevelop Ross cottage hospital into a community hospital by a less than fully co-operative attitude on the part of West Midlands regional health authority? Will he be careful that any advice that he gives to the regional health authorities reflects the wish to sustain the viability and independence of the health authority to provide what it deems to be appropriate for an area and that no element of discouragement floats in?

Mr. Dorrell: One great virtue of our reforms is that we shall be rather less heavy handed than we may have been in the past in the type of advice that we offer from the centre to a district health authority. I believe that as a result there will be greater diversity of local decisions and of health care available and the manner in which it is provided. We hope that that will lead to improved standards and more uniformity in the quality of health care, which in the end is what the patient is interested in.

Mr. Skinner: Has the Minister considered the possibility of setting up a royal commission to look into cottage hospitals with a view to safeguarding their future? He could put in charge a man who is desperate for a job—he sits below the Gangway—and who is the last leader of the SDP. He has done a good job for the Tory party over the years and the Minister could repay him the compliment.

Mr. Dorrell: The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) will be grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his concern about his future well-being.

Doctors (Recruitment)

10. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to meet members of the medical practices committee to discuss the recruitment of doctors.

13. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many general practitioners there are now in the National Health Service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department holds regular meetings with the chairman of the medical practices committee. We are not aware of problems with regard to the recruitment of doctors. At 1 October 1988 there were 25,322 unrestricted principals in England. That is 4,000 more than in 1979.

Mr. Cran: Does my hon. Friend agree that not inconsiderable delays can occur between the practice obtaining approval to recruit a general practitioner and the recruitment taking place and that that is to the clear detriment of the local community? Therefore, when she next meets the chairman of the medical practices committee, will she ask him to introduce a more rigorous monitoring system that will ensure that appointments are made in under a year and that if a practice does not intend to take advantage of it, the opportunity to have a new doctor is given to another practice?

Mrs. Bottomley: I am aware of my hon. Friend's concern about the matter, particularly the case which arose in his constituency. Time is needed to advertise and to interview prospective candidates and, of course, for new appointees to give notice. Certainly, I shall examine closely the point made and raise it with the relevant committee the next time I meet it.

Mr. Evennett: I thank my hon. Friend for her reply and I welcome the increased number of GPs, which shows the Government's commitment to the NHS. Will she confirm that GP list sizes have dropped dramatically in the past couple of years? Does she agree that the GP now has more time to deal with the individual patient, which is in the interest of the GP, the patient and the NHS?

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. For the first time, the GP list size has fallen below 2,000. That is a major achievement. Not only do we have smaller list sizes, but the GP has at his disposal a much larger practice team. There has been 70 per cent. increase in the number of ancillary staff in the practice. That all means better care for patients.

Mr. Win Griffiths: How many general practitioners will run their own budgets next year? Is there any truth in the rumour in the press last weekend that the software will not be available for GPs to run their budgets?

Mrs. Bottomley: The whole proposal to have budget holders is going well, and about 400 practices have expressed an interest. Clearly, they will not be finally approved until we are confident that they can undertake the responsibilities. A practice budget will provide general practitioners with more autonomy and control. GPs are willing to join the scheme and we welcome the steps forward. We are making good progress with the software and we are confident that it will be possible fully to implement the proposals.

Community Care

12. **Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he next expects to meet the Association of Directors of Social Services to discuss community care.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I hold regular formal and informal meetings with the ADSS, but there is no fixed date for the next meeting.

Mr. O'Brien: When the Minister meets the directors of social services will she agree to provide the additional necessary funds, as promised in the report of Sir Roy Griffiths, to maintain services to the elderly, the mentally ill and other people in need? Will she consider funding the additional social workers that will be necessary to meet the demand for social work? Will she also consider the suggestion of creating a Minister of Community Care?

Mrs. Bottomley: Indeed, but when I meet the ADSS, which is frequently, as I made clear, I shall speak again about the vast sums already spent on community care—about £3·5 billion—as well as about the importance of new policies and ensuring that those resources are spent effectively and well in the interests of the individuals concerned. We have made it clear that adequate resources will be available and we are working openly and in close consultation with the ADSS on that popular policy.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Hannam:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 June.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Mr. Hannam: As this is World Environment Day, may I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the United Nations award to her? Is not it a fact that my right hon. Friend's recent decision to limit CO_2 emissions in 2005 to the present levels will represent about a 30 per cent. reduction in CO_2 emissions from the projected levels? Surely this will mean substantial sacrifices on the part of energy consumers.

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Of course, I welcome the award as a recognition of the lead that the Government have taken on environmental matters. We have put forward a target time of 2005 so that we can get down the CO_2 emissions during that year to where they are this year. That is a realistic target and one which I think will become a world consensus. I am very glad that the chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has endorsed that as a realistic target and believes that in 15 years' time we shall have better science on which to make further decisions.

Mr. Kinnock: Does the Prime Minister appreciate that she spoke for the whole country recently when she said that the poll tax had been a huge mistake?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is mistaken—I never said any such thing. I am very sorry to disappoint him, but he should not believe everything he reads in the newspapers.

Mr. Kinnock: I am sad that the reports that there was some common sense breaking out in Downing street have been slightly exaggerated. Is the Prime Minister aware that the costs of administering poll tax are huge? Is she aware that there is chaos in many areas about the collection of the poll tax? Does she appreciate that poll tax capping will inflict crippling losses, especially on children's education? When all those things are true, is not it obvious that the only thing wrong with her saying that the poll tax is a huge mistake is that it was a gross understatement?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman never conditions his supplementary questions to my previous replies; perhaps that is beyond his capacity to think on his feet. With regard to the collection of the community charge, the right hon. Gentleman and his advisers will be aware that we accelerated the taxpayer's contribution, the revenue support grant, to local authorities so that they got virtually three months' grant in place of the two months that they otherwise would have got. That gives them a considerable advantage in cash terms so that if they put it on deposit they have a good extra amount to tide them over any difficulties.

Mr. Kinnock: Perhaps the right hon. Lady will condition herself to the reality that all over the country, under Conservative and Labour councils, people are saying, "This poll tax is costing us much more than the rates ever did. Where is the sense, prudence and fairness in that?" Is not it clear that such a tax is doomed, as it deserves to be, along with the Government who invented it?

The Prime Minister: I understand that the right hon. Gentleman feels strongly about the community charge, especially as he lives in Ealing, where, having had a Labour council, there is a very high community charge. But who is the right hon. Gentleman to talk? We looked at the Labour party's document, having heard Labour's director of campaigns and communications promise on 4 April that the next major policy statement by the Labour party would be on 23 and 24 May. We were told:

"In that will be contained our fully worked out alternative to the poll tax."

What did we see when we got that document? We found a list of principles followed by the statement:

"The practical means by which we achieve these aims and principles are set out in a background paper."

There is no background paper. The Labour party does not have a clue.

Sir Bernard Braine: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the astonishment and dismay of right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House at the decision of the unelected Chamber on the War Crimes Bill? Will she bear it in mind that Australia, Canada and the United States, three countries with legal systems not dissimilar to ours and which do not take second place to us in regard to human rights, legislated on this long ago? Will she weigh very carefully in coming to any decision on this grave matter the words in the conclusion of the Hetherington-Chalmers report that to take no action against such monstrous crimes—[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."] I am quoting——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Father of the House must not do that. He must paraphrase.

Sir Bernard Braine: —will taint the United Kingdom with the slur of becoming a haven for war criminals? Is not it clear that the only moral conclusion to be reached is that the Bill must be introduced in another Session?

The Prime Minister: Of course I recognise the extremely strong feelings, because of the hideous nature of the crimes. We shall be considering carefully the implications of the result of the debate in another place and how best to proceed, bearing in mind the size of the majority in this House on a free vote. It may be that the House itself will wish to discuss the matter, in which case I am sure that that will be pursued through my right hon. and learned Friend the Lord President.

Q2. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Howarth: Is the right hon. Lady aware that her Government are presiding over record levels of homelessness, high mortgage costs, high rent increases and the complete collapse of the private rented sector? What does she intend to do about that?

The Prime Minister: The Government are also presiding over a record number of homes. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that considerable proposals have been made and money allocated to reduce homelessness. It was recently announced that £250 million would be devoted to it, with considerable increases in the money being made available in the coming two years, from £985 million to £1,700 million, to the Housing Corporation and housing associations to build more houses suitable for those and other people.

Q3. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hind: My right hon. Friend will be aware of the success of inward investment in Britain. She has no doubt noted that 41 per cent. of American investment and 38 per cent. of Japanese investment in Europe comes to Britain. Does she agree that if the Labour party put the unions back in the saddle, overtaxed everyone and increased public expenditure that new investment would end and Britain would become the sick man of Europe, as it was in 1979?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that a record amount of inward investment in the Community comes to this country from the United States, Japan and other countries. Part of the reason for that is the kind of free enterprise economy that we run and our excellent record on enterprise, production and manufacturing investment. All those things would go if the Labour party ever put into practice its policy document, which goes back to the failed policies of the past.

Mr. Ashdown: Does the Prime Minister agree with the very sensible views of Hans-Dietrich Genscher, the West German Foreign Minister, who said that NATO will have to change and evolve to become the keystone of a new pan-European defence structure if the long-term stability and security of Europe is to be maintained?

The Prime Minister: They are not new or sudden. I shall be speaking to a meeting of NATO Foreign Ministers at Turnberry on Thursday and there will also be a NATO summit in this country in June-July to do just that.

Mr. Watts: Does my right hon. Friend agree that although it would be inappropriate for the Government to respond to the illegal action of France in banning British beef imports by a similar illegal action of our own, it is perfectly reasonable for British consumers to use their purchasing power to boycott French goods, inluding the appalling French Golden Delicious apples?

The Prime Minister: I understand my hon. Friend's strong feelings, but I must tell him that the Commission has been extremely good and quick in its action. It is quite illegal to ban exports from this country to Germany or France and the Commission is taking action. The special veterinary committee of the Community has agreed that Britain has taken all action possible and that British beef is safe.

Q4. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Illsley: Does the Prime Minister agree that at a time of low morale in the teaching profession and teacher shortages it is a tragedy that Barnsley metropolitan borough council is having to sack teachers and close its music teaching centre, thereby depriving local children of tuition in music, simply as a result of her Government's arbitrary and artificial poll tax capping?

The Prime Minister: That is not the cause, and it is absolute nonsense for the hon. Gentleman to say that. Local authorities such as mine whose education record is unbeaten have managed to do it with a low community charge. They manage things very well with the co-operation of their teaching staff and exhibit excellent local authority management.

Q6. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Amos: Will my right hon. Friend note that I had British beef for lunch? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us try to get into order.

Mr. Amos: Will she convey the congratulations of my farmers to the EEC Commission on its prompt action on the illegal ban imposed by certain EEC countries which is based on pure commercial interests? Will she confirm that all the independent scientific and medical evidence shows that it is perfectly safe to eat British beef? Does she agree that the decision by Northumberland county council to ban beef, which was withdrawn within two days, was an utter disgrace?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend for his meaty question. I entirely agree that the Commission has acted quickly, in response to the ban, which it regards as illegal. I agree that the special committee of veterinary experts attached to the Community has approved of everything that we have done in taking every possible measure in pursuit of the recommendations of the Southwood and Tyrrell committees and that British beef is safe. I also agree that those who have banned British beef have done so more to protect their farmers than for anything else. I will gladly pass on my hon. Friend's remarks.

Q7. **Mr. John P. Smith:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Smith: I thank the Prime Minister for her reply. I hope that she enjoys the rest of her day and that she has a pleasant night's sleep in a warm bed. Is she aware that this is National Housing Week? What will she do for those of my constituents who do not even have a home to go to tonight?

The Prime Minister: I shall tell the hon. Gentleman precisely what has been done. I understand that just over 1,000 people sometimes sleep out rough in London. Some of them have other problems such as being mentally retarded, or have genuine problems and are genuine social cases. Others are not. During the lifetime of the Government, a great many hostel places have been built. There are now more than 21,000 hostel places in London, including some 3,000 emergency places and direct access beds. We have already just allocated another— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

The Prime Minister: They do not like to hear the facts, Mr. Speaker. Some £250 million will be spent over the next two years to provide nearly 15,000 extra lettings. The new housing association hostels will be allocated another £100 million, all to help with the problem of the homeless. There are far more council flats empty in London than there are people homeless on London streets.

Coach Crash (France)

3.32 pm

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East) (by private notice): To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the coach crash on the A6 near Auxerre in France.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Cecil Parkinson) *rose—[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will hon. Members who are not remaining to hear the private notice question please leave quietly?

Mr. Parkinson: Last Sunday, 3 June, at 8 am local time, a coach belonging to Montego European Travel went off the road near Auxerre in France, approximately 80 miles south of Paris, and rolled on to its side. Of the passengers and crew, 11 were killed, 18 seriously injured and 47 slightly injured. On behalf of the Government and, I am sure, the whole House, I should like to take this opportunity to express our sympathy to the families and friends of those injured or killed in this dreadful accident. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

I am sure that I also speak for the whole House in paying tribute to the emergency services in France, whose prompt response may well have prevented further deaths. The British consul-general and his assistant went immediately to the scene of the accident and spent the day at the hospitals and with relatives, assisting them and providing information to the families involved.

The French started an investigation immediately, and the Government offered their help. Two of my senior vehicle investigation experts flew to France that evening to assist the French authorities, and I expect a full report on the vehicle from them next week. An examining magistrate has been appointed by the French prefecture to investigate all the circumstances of the accident.

My vehicle inspectors have already told me that the right-hand front tyre had failed. It was not a remould, was a correct size for the vehicle and was in good condition, and there was no sign of under-inflation. However, the tread had separated from the tyre, and the reason for that is being investigated further. The vehicle was fitted with a tachograph, which has been taken into the possession of the French police and is being checked.

I am sure that the House will appreciate that I must not say anything that would prejudge the outcome of the investigation. It is my intention to ensure that all the circumstances are fully investigated and the facts made available. I expect to receive a full report about the vehicle next week, and we have agreed with the French authorities that we will exchange reports.

The Government attach the highest importance to coach safety and to driver training. Before it goes on the road, each coach is approved and certificated. It is required to undergo an annual roadworthiness inspection. During the past three years, we have increased the number of special checks on coach safety to ensure that high standards are maintained. The coach involved in the accident had been checked in accordance with all the British requirements, and had been found to be satisfactory.

Britain has been playing a leading role in Europe in developing high standards of coach safety. In particular, we have been pressing for the provision of seat belts in coaches, and, in the light of this tragic accident, we shall be renewing our pressure for the removal of obstacles to their standard fitment in all our coaches. I shall be having urgent discussions with the Bus and Coach Council, and others concerned, about any lessons that can be learnt from the accident to ensure that we maintain and secure the safest possible coach travel. I shall also seek to accelerate the fitting of speed limiters.

I would like to end as I began—by expressing my sympathy to the families and friends of those tragically involved in this terrible accident.

Mr. Snape: Let me, on behalf of all Opposition Members, associate myself with the expressions of sympathy tendered to the bereaved and to relatives of those injured in the tragedy, which has caused enormous shock and grief, especially in the west midlands.

May I press the Secretary of State about the implementation of compulsory seat belts and speed limiters? Can he give the House a date when that is likely to happen? He has rightly insisted on the unilateral implementation of seat-belt legislation for motor cars; why not do the same for coaches?

What plans has the right hon. Gentleman for stricter scrutiny of tachographs, especially on long-distance coaches? Will he call coach operators together to discuss speed and stability, and structural integrity—especially that of double-deck, high capacity vehicles such as the one involved in the accident? Has he any plans to introduce a ban on recut as well as remould tyres for coach operators, especially those operating over long distances?

Will the right hon. Gentleman comment on the story, featured in the *Daily Mail* this morning, that the company had been operating illegally for some months? Is he aware that Opposition Members believe that this appalling tragedy is a direct result of coach deregulation, which has led—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."]—oh, yes—which has led to a proliferation of back-street operators who have neither the time, the money nor the resources to maintain their coaches adequately?

Mr. Parkinson: I should like to thank the hon. Gentleman for his remarks about the French authorities, and to join him in once more expressing my sympathy to relatives.

Seat belts are within the competence of the Community, and we have been leading the way to have them fitted in all our coaches. We have the support only of the Danes, and the slightly half-hearted support of the Germans; the remainder of the Community is opposed. As recently as last Thursday we pressed the Commission to come forward with a directive. We could take unilateral action, but it would be illegal and we could not enforce it. It would be a pointless gesture of the sort on which we do not intend to waste time.

As the House knows, since 1988 all new coaches have to be fitted with speed limiters. Any coaches built between 1984 and 1988 had to have them fitted by 1 April this year. Any built between 1974 and 1983 must have them fitted by next April. I intend to ask the Bus and Coach Council to bring forward that process. All coaches will be fitted with speed limiters by next April.

I thank the hon. Gentleman for his remarks about tachographs. As he will recall, his party has consistently opposed them, under pressure from the Transport and

General Workers Union. It coined the phrase "spies in the cab." Speed limiters are now fitted to long-distance coaches and we monitor them. More tests have been carried out during the past year than ever before. Indeed, we have been increasing the number of inspections, which contradicts the claim of his hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott).

The hon. Gentleman's question about recuts and remoulds was hypothetical. He was pursuing a point, made quite erroneously, that the tyre was a retread. It was not a retread; it was in good condition. It has been inspected by the inspectorate, and it was not failed—

Mr. Snape: Was it a recut?

Mr. Parkinson: It was not a recut or a retread. The tyre was in good condition.

I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is aware that the claim about the company operating illegally was made by a rival organisation, and it is being investigated. It is beyond doubt that the coach was properly licensed and was being properly operated last Thursday.

In referring to coach deregulation, the hon. Gentleman's prejudice once again overruled his knowledge. The plain fact is that these coaches have not been regulated for more than 10 years. Indeed, I believe that it is almost 16 years. It is absolute and utter nonsense to claim that the tragedy was a result of the recent deregulation of bus services. It struck an unfortunate note on this occasion.

Mrs. Maureen Hicks (Wolverhampton, North-East): It is with great sadness that I inform my right hon. Friend that four of those killed on the weekend were from my constituency—Mr. and Mrs. Evans, who were celebrating their retirement, and Mr. and Mrs. Orme. I thank my right hon. Friend for his kind words, which I shall take back to my constituents. I am sure that they will appreciate the fact that he is urgently investigating the accident.

The families of those four people and of the others killed do not want cheap party politics and I am sad that the opportunity to do that has been taken today. They want hope—hope that lessons will be learnt and that future lives will be saved. I hope that the Government and others responsible for reviewing the position—whether coach operators, drivers or the EC—will complete their investigations as soon as possible. The Government must introduce legislation, if need be in the cold light of day when the speculation and the emotion had died down, on compulsory seat belts and, possibly, even on speed restrictions for coaches, as is the case in some EC countries.

I ask my right hon. Friend to come to the House as soon as possible with his report of the investigation, because I am sure that the families in Wolverhampton want that reassurance.

Mr. Parkinson: May I express my sympathy to my hon. Friend and those of her constituents who suffered bereavement and injury in this terrible accident? We are determined that any lessons that can be learnt will be learnt. The investigation will be thorough. As my hon. Friend pointed out, this has absolutely nothing to do with deregulation. In spite of this terrible accident, we have one of the best records in Europe—half as many deaths as in France—and that is because we set and implement high safety standards, and we shall continue to do so.

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): On behalf of my party, I express sympathy to all those who suffered and to their families who are still suffering. Will the Secretary of State comment on the current proposal that coach operators should have a licence for life? I hope that that proposal will be rejected and that the licence will continue to have to be renewed every five years.

Will he also comment on the inspection of the vehicles? There were suspicions about the tyres in this case, but we have now heard that they were all right. Are all tyres inspected and are coaches which travel abroad allowed to have retreads? Will he also comment on the speed limits which apply in Britain, because I understand that coach drivers here are not allowed to use the fast lane or the overtaking lane?

Finally, will he comment on the fact that there is no training certificate for couriers. In this case they were helpful, but they could have been more helpful. The standards of couriers need to be raised, and a certificate for them approved by the Government.

Mr. Parkinson: There is a slightly misleading and worrying headline in the *Evening Standard* today which suggests that the driver had had the job for only 10 days. That may well have been the case, but he has had a licence to drive such vehicles for more than two years. It is a five-year licence, so it has three more years to run. The vehicle was fully inspected in July 1989 and is due for inspection again in July this year.

We are the only country in Europe to insist on a tilt test for double deckers. They have to be capable of leaning, fully laden on top, at an angle of 28 deg without toppling over before they are allowed on the road and this bus had passed that test.

We have considered speed limits. Our coaches are allowed to travel at 70 mph and to use the outside lane on motorways. Yesterday, two of our newspapers had coaches trailed and found that a number were exceeding the speed limit, which is illegal. By next April, limiters will be fixed to all coaches built after 1973. It will not then be possible to drive them faster than 70 mph. That law will be rigidly enforced and anybody who breaks it will be punished. I note what the hon. Gentleman says about couriers. He makes an interesting and worthwhile point, which I shall take up with the Bus and Coach Council.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Was there not a tragic inevitability about the standard of driving that was described by my right hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker) when she held office in the Department of Transport as "intimidatory"? Is it not a fact that some of these tower blocks on wheels have evolved from rules which were made for single-decker coaches, which now bear no relationship to the rules needed for the double-decker buses plying in our towns and cities?

Is my right hon. Friend aware how many times I have asked him to impose speed limits on these coaches?

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): Not from my hon. Friend.

Mr. Adley: My hon. Friend is a director of National Express, and he will have his chance to speak later.

Is my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State aware how often I have asked him and his Department to consider banning coaches from the outside lane of

[Mr. Adley]

motorways? Is he aware that the Bus and Coach Council has consistently resisted those proposals and his attempts to introduce tachographs, which many of us have sought for many years? Will my right hon. Friend contemplate the fact that what he has just said means that the older the coach the more it can escape from these rigid regulations? Should we not now impose discipline on those people and let them argue why it should not be imposed?

Mr. Parkinson: My hon. Friend's commitment to trains and his hostility to coaches is extremely well known, and he has just given another illustration of it. The coach concerned had been certified as fit to be on the road and capable of being driven at the speed recorded. The driver held a properly obtained licence.

Mr. Snape: But was it travelling at the legal speed?

Mr. Parkinson: I was not talking about the speed at the time: I was saying that the bus was certified and the driver properly qualified.

I should like to give my hon. Friend some figures that I hope he will find encouraging. They relate to the number of casualties per billion passenger kilometres. Between 1975 and 1979, there were 1·2 deaths; between 1980 and 1984, 0·7; and between 1985 and 1988, 0·5 deaths per billion passenger kilometres. All injuries in the same period also showed a fall. There is no evidence to support my hon. Friend's totally baseless assertion that our roads are becoming more dangerous and that accidents are on the increase. The trend is encouragingly downwards.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I appeal for single questions on this very serious subject?

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): I add my deepest sympathies to the relatives of those killed and injured in that dreadful accident. I make special mention of the six people from my own constituency who were killed and the 15 who were injured. May I have the Minister's assurance that the resources of his own Department, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department of Health will, where necessary, be made available to the relatives who need help and advice in the aftermath of the tragedy? Will he give an assurance also that, whereas the French inquiry is a separate matter, there will be an independent Department of Transport inquiry into speed limits, safety belts and tyre safety standards—and that the results will be published in full and be acted upon?

Mr. Parkinson: First thing yesterday morning, the hon. Gentleman was in touch with my Department, and I hope that we were able to help in every way that we could. We appreciate that the hon. Gentleman's constituency is probably affected worse than that of any other right hon. or hon. Member. The three Departments that the hon. Gentleman mentioned will do everything that they can to help the survivors and the families of those who died.

The French have launched a police inquiry. Under French law, an examining magistrate has been appointed who will consider all the facts. In parallel, we have sent investigators to consider the technical aspects of the accident. As bodies will almost certainly be returned to this country, inquests will also be held here. We shall seek to make available for those inquests any information that we have, and will also make it available to the House. If there is a need for further action, we shall not hesitate to take it.

Mr. Roger King: The whole bus and coach industry agrees with my right hon. Friend's remarks, and extends its sympathies to the surviving victims of a tragic disaster. Will my right hon. Friend urge upon the French authorities the need to investigate the implications of the alleged ditch running alongside a high-speed road, which appears to have been the primary cause of the vehicle going over on its side? Is my right hon. Friend aware that such double-deck vehicles are extremely stable and that only one has been involved in an accident in the United Kingdom in the 10 years that they have been in operation —when one fell on its side, tragically killing one person and injuring two dozen others?

There are several hundred such vehicles in this country, and they each travel approximately 100,000 miles a year. They are designed for reasonably quick, safe and attractive travel between cities and nations. If there are lessons to be learnt from the accident—lessons not just in coach design but in road design as well—they will be well taken on board.

Mr. Parkinson: I note what my hon. Friend says. Although I shall bring his remarks to the attention of the French authorities, I do not think that they will be persuaded to fill in any of the ditches at the roadside as a result of the accident. I confirm what he said when he gave statistics about coaches. This is a terrible accident and no one seeks to minimise it in any way, but it does no service to anyone to give the impression that such buses have proved unsafe in the past. They have a good safety record. We shall ensure that they maintain their present high standards and we will rigorously enforce the regulations.

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): May I join the Secretary of State and my hon. Friends the Members for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) and for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) in their expression of sympathy for the bereaved and injured, 13 of whom came from Stoke-on-Trent, south Cheshire and north Staffordshire? Is the Secretary of State satisfied with standards in Britain, as he said that the bus met all of them? Does that not put a question mark over British standards of safety and maintenance and the speed regulations?

Bearing in mind the question mark over the operation of the company involved—which, like the travel agent, was not a member of the Association of British Travel Agents —will the Secretary of State this afternoon at least commit himself to a departmental public inquiry, which, I understand from his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for The Wrekin, he has not yet done? Surely the least that he can do this afternoon is give an assurance to the bereaved and injured that there will be a Government inquiry?

Mr. Parkinson: The hon. Gentleman talks about the regulations, but although we are talking about a small company, all the evidence shows that it conformed to the law, that all its vehicles were tested and had passed the test, and all its drivers were qualified to drive such a bus. As he knows, a police investigation is going on in France and that inhibits us. For example, the police have seized the tachograph.

I remind the hon. Gentleman that the accident happened in France and therefore the French are in charge of the investigation. We have sent our inspectorate over to carry out a parallel investigation. The two reports will be made available to the House, and it may well come to the conclusion that the accident has been fully investigated and is fully understood. If there are lessons to be learnt, we shall learn them. I shall keep an open mind about the need for further inquiries, but the matter is being thoroughly investigated at the moment.

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde): So that we may learn more about the factors that cause tyre blow-out, will my hon. Friend ask the transport and road research laboratory to co-ordinate Europewide research on this important matter?

Mr. Parkinson: The TRRL is already carrying out investigations into the difficult subject of tyre blow-outs, which happen from time to time and have terrible consequences. The research that my hon. Friend wants is already being carried out.

Ms. Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): May I add my sympathy to that which has already been extended to the bereaved and injured? Will the Secretary of State tell us to what extent he will have a full safety overhaul? It is not enough for him to say that existing safety levels have been maintained. He needs to overhaul road safety completely. Will he also give an assurance that, when the public inquiry takes place, he will consider the schedules that road operators have to keep to catch ferries from France back to this country? Will he tell the House the last occasion on which the coach was checked?

Mr. Parkinson: I again express my sympathy to the hon. Lady, and to her constituents for their loss in this dreadful accident. Of course we shall see what we can learn from the incident. However, I must point out that we have high safety standards and that we enforce them rigorously. If more should be done, it will be done and that is what the investigation is about. We shall have to see whether anything emerges from that investigation that requires further action.

We shall also look again—and I have already discussed this with my colleagues—at the question of speed limits for coaches and whether the 70 mph limit is satisfactory. Until this terrible accident, there had been a continuing improvement, partly because of higher standards and partly because they were rigorously enforced. There is no question of seeking to do anything other than learning as many lessons as we can and taking the action necessary as a result of those lessons.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a private notice question. I have allowed it to run rather longer than usual because of its importance. I shall take two more questions each from both sides and then, I hope, I shall have called all hon. Members whose constituents have been affected by this tragic accident.

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): The whole question of fitting seat belts on coaches has been revived by this tragic accident. Recognising the limitations placed on my right hon. Friend by the EC, does he agree that there is nothing to prevent the Bus and Coach Council recommending to its members that they should voluntarily fit seat belts in coaches? In the process, he might also suggest to the council that, if we are to see competition on coach services, many of us would prefer to see it based on competition between vehicles that have seat belts and those that have not, rather than on speed, which sometimes appears to be the only criterion.

Mr. Parkinson: I thank my hon. Friend for that helpful suggestion and I will take up the matter with the Bus and Coach Council. Manufacturers are willing to fit seat belts if operators ask for them. Seat belts are offered to the operators, and I will suggest to the Bus and Coach Council that it encourages its members to fit them. I repeat that we cannot enforce that, because it is a Community matter and we have not been able to persuade our Community partners that seat belts are necessary. However, there is nothing to prevent members of the Bus and Coach Council from volunteering, and seat belts are available.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Is the Secretary of State aware, without commenting on this firm or anticipating any inquiry—which would be wrong—that it is common knowledge that many cowboy firms now operate? It is his responsibility to investigate that and to do what he can to outlaw them.

Is the right hon. Gentleman also aware that a new motorway madness is emerging in Britain, as I have witnessed recently? Drivers are now driving on the inside lane and then cutting into the outside lane at 100 mph, which never happened before, and there is no police regulation. I have driven about 600 miles to conferences this weekend and I did not see one police car. Can something be done about that, please?

Mr. Parkinson: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, the enforcement of the law is a matter for the police and I will bring the matter to the attention of the Association of Chief Police Officers. On cowboy firms, one reason why we have increased the number of spot checks is to try to catch out those who are not playing by the rules and who are not obeying the law. The number of spot checks has been increased substantially precisely for that purpose. By next April, virtually all our coaches will have limiters which will be set by law at 70 mph and which should therefore control the speed of our coaches.

The right hon. Gentleman's point about motorway driving is fair. As he knows, although we have one of the best records in Europe, 105 people are killed every week on our roads and part of the reason for that is bad driving. Many lives could be saved by the simple use of common sense by drivers and by pedestrians. It has been revealed that 44 per cent. of all pedestrians involved in accidents did not look either way when they stepped on to the road. Simple precautions could save many lives.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, at a time of sadness and bereavement, the House has not distinguished itself, because most questions this afternoon have almost implied a reason for the terrible crash and disaster? Should we not do what Mr. Asquith said years ago—wait and see? The reason might be a production fault in the tyre or a bit of metal lying on the motorway. Hon. Members are panicking this afternoon and suggesting all sorts of reasons for the accident. Why do we not be sensible for a change and wait and see?

Mr. Parkinson: I have much sympathy with my hon. Friend's point of view. It is absolutely right for Members of Parliament to express their concern for their constituents on occasions such as this, and most hon. Members involved have been able to do so. We should not jump to conclusions about this matter. We certainly should not find people guilty before they have had a trial.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): The family and friends of my constituents who are in intensive care with their children want to be quite certain that everything is being done to make sure not only that they are assisted back to this country but that such an accident will never happen again. Will the Secretary of State ensure that an immediate programme of research into the efficiency of seat belts—the lap type and shoulder type—is undertaken? Will he ensure also that the examining magistrate's report will be translated and made available to the House of Commons as soon as it is available, as the powers that are available to French magistrates are far wider than those in this country, and the report may contain information that is vital to road safety?

Mr. Parkinson: I express my sympathy to the hon. Lady. We in the Department have been convinced that seat belts would reduce the number of deaths and injuries, and that is why we have been pressing for them. We shall continue to make every effort to persuade our Community colleagues.

On the examining magistrate, I had better be a little careful. The examining magistrate may come to the conclusion that she wishes to institute proceedings. I do not say that to prejudge the issue. Therefore, I do not know at what stage she would be prepared to allow me to have a copy of her findings. As I have said, I want the House to have the full facts, and, as soon as I am in a position to make them available, I shall.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I hope that I have called all the hon. Members whose constituents have been directly involved in this tragic accident. If I have not, will they indicate and I shall call them? In that case, we must now move on to the second private notice question.

Shellfish (North-East Coast)

4.3 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed) *(by private notice):* To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will make a statement about the safety of shellfish caught off the north-east coast in the light of the warnings issued by his Department.

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): On 26 May, my Department issued a public warning that routine monitoring of the north-east coast of England by Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food scientists had found high levels of a toxin in shellfish. The toxin is concentrated by shellfish from a particular kind of naturally occurring algae which occurs at this time of the year.

My Department advised that consumption of all locally caught shellfish, including crustaceans such as crabs, lobsters, shrimps and prawns could cause illness, and should not be eaten while toxin levels remained high. The warning applied to shellfish taken from the coast between the Humber and Montrose. Local warning notices were issued and posted.

The occurrence of toxins at the levels found recently in shellfish from the north-east have in the past caused serious illness. Further extensive testing of molluscan shellfish—for example, mussels—has shown that the current levels of toxin are such that the public must, for the time being, refrain from consuming them. However, with the exception of crabs, the safety of all crustaceans such as lobsters, prawns and shrimps caught off the north-east coast has now been firmly established. The testing of crabs has revealed small amounts of toxin in the edible meat, and more tests are being made to obtain sufficient reassurance to enable the warning on crabs to be lifted.

The Department of Health, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Scottish Office have worked closely in addressing this problem and clear advice has been given to and acted upon by the public. I should also like to acknowledge the enormous effort put in to the control action and monitoring by the local authorities concerned.

Mr. Beith: Although it is obviously necessary to issue a warning about mussels and molluscs, as has happened in previous years, why, when there is no evidence of any danger from eating lobsters or prawns, did the Ministry's press release say that all locally caught shellfish, including crustaceans, crabs, lobsters, shrimps and prawns, could cause illness and must not be eaten? What tests had been carried out on lobsters, crabs or prawns when the statement was made? What tests were carried out over the next three days of the bank holiday weekend after the statement had been made? Does the Secretary of State realise what that greatly widened warning has done to the fragile livelihoods of the east-coast fishermen and fish processors?

What is the difference between compensating egg producers when ministerial statements are misleading and cause serious damage, and compensating the fishermen? Why is not the Minister responsible for fisheries, who is sitting beside the right hon. and learned Gentleman, responding favourably to the fishermen's demands for

reasonable compensation for the extent to which the warning went beyond what has been shown on the evidence?

Mr. Clarke: Paralytic shellfish poisoning is a dangerous disease. The livelihoods of a great many fishermen would probably have been destroyed if the Department concerned had not taken prompt action and if tragic results had occurred. We had a serious outbreak in 1968, when 78 people were affected. The toxic levels that were found on this occasion were as high as on that occasion. As the hon. Gentleman fairly said, toxic levels were lower in the intervening years, when routine local notices have sufficed.

In the circumstances, it was wise to be prudent and it was necessary to carry out the examinations, which were carried out, on crabs, lobsters, shrimps and prawns which feed as scavengers, to ensure that the toxin levels were safe. Toxin levels were found in lobsters, but in the digestive tract, which is not consumed. Toxin levels are still being found in crabs, the digestive tracts of which are consumed. We are continuing to monitor crabs and we shall give the "all clear" for crabs as soon as possible.

This is a naturally occurring phenomenon and I realise that it causes loss to the fishermen whenever it occurs. Indeed, we have records of it dating back to 1814. The phenomenon is well known in north America and occurs in continental Europe also. The statements given by Ministers—by my Department and others—were not misleading at any stage but were a prudent protection of public health.

I do not believe that there is any case for compensation for the fishermen who collect—they do not rear—these naturally occurring crustaceans and shellfish. Countless farmers are not compensated for naturally occurring disasters. I am not an expert on those matters and this issue is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. As a non-farming Minister, with farming constituents, I do not find that an instant case can be made for compensating the fishermen, although I appreciate that they have suffered an unfortunate blow to their livelihoods from a naturally occurring phenomenon, which they all know perfectly well occurs in the stretch of the coast that they fish.

Mr. William Hague (Richmond, Yorks): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the way in which his Department and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food have worked together when handling this matter demonstrates the effectiveness of the current arrangements for alerting consumers when there is a possibility of a genuine problem affecting food? Can my right hon. and learned Friend think of any instance in which any other European Community country has been so quick to inform the consumer when there has been a similar problem?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The Departments involved sometimes feel that they cannot win. In all these instances, we act promptly on the basis of the scientific and medical evidence. That is what we have done, on this and other occasions. However, I accept that one cannot win whatever one does. If one issues a warning, one is attacked by those whose livelihoods depend on food; if one does not issue a warning, one is attacked by the lobbyists who claim that there is a conspiracy between oneself and the producer——

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Curry): It is a hard life.

Mr. Clarke: Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend. It is a hard life. Nevertheless, our actions on this occasion have received almost universal support. We have taken the only steps possible in the interests of public health. Although I do not have any official confirmation of this, I am led to understand that the French have banned the collection of shellfish in the mouth of the Rhone. I am certain that on all matters of food safety we have the best system in western Europe. I hope that all countries act as promptly as we do on such occasions and on all occasions.

Mr. Jack Thompson (Wansbeck): Will the Secretary of State recognise that, although the development of algae is a natural phenomenon, it is aggravated by the pollution problems in the North sea? That is the nub of the problem. I have lived all my life on the north-east coast of England. When I was a young man, it was reasonable to collect mussels and whelks along the coast, although on and off there was a ban. However, bans were not on the scale of the present ban. When will real action be taken to overcome the problem by pressurising the newly privatised water authorities to take serious action on the problem?

Mr. Clarke: I talked about acting on scientific and medical evidence. With the greatest respect to the hon. Gentleman, there is not a scrap of evidence to support his assertion that the problem has anything to do with the pollution of the North sea. The hon. Gentleman is not a very old man. He is a little older than me, but he was not alive in 1814, when the first incident was recorded of these algae blooming on that part of the north-east coast. It has been a regular occurrence for more than 100 years off that coast. People have died every now and again over the years from eating shellfish. That is well known by most people. I am glad that, when the hon. Gentleman collected shellfish in his youth, he did not disregard health warnings about the dangers of collecting them in the months of May and June, when in some years the algae bloom in such a way that toxins reach a dangerous level.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, while there are risks from fishing in the North sea and natural events cause difficulties for fishermen, there is a wider problem in the state of the North sea fishing industry in general? Will he pass a message to his right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on that point, so that we can have a review of the financial arrangements for our fishermen?

Mr. Clarke: The Minister responsible for fisheries is sitting on the Front Bench at this moment. He and I have discussed the matter already. I am answering the question because it relates to public health, but my hon. Friend is much involved in the problems of fishing in the north-east. He and I regret that the fishermen of the north-east have suffered this misfortune and are having a particularly bad year because of the algae, which for the time being are cutting back part of their livelihood. I take on board the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) and I know that my hon. Friend the Minister will note them carefully, too.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): Can the Secretary of State explain why, having issued a serious public health warning on a Saturday about algae off the north-east coast, the Minister responsible for environmental and public health issues and his Department was unavailable for comment to provide clarification until the middle of the following week? That led to maximum confusion and uncertainty about the extent and nature of the threat. Does the Secretary of State accept that such a performance by a Government Department is disgraceful and unacceptable? What steps does he intend to take to ensure that that performance is not repeated in the future?

Mr. Clarke: With the greatest respect, I strongly refute all those allegations. It is becoming the fashion, every time that a warning has to be issued about a food danger, for people to make absurd allegations about the conduct of the Departments. Scientists and experts were working and were available over the weekend. Ministers from all the Departments involved worked closely together. The statements that we issued were perfectly clear and accurate and were a prompt and proper response to protect public safety. It is becoming absurd. Hon. Members search for scandal when prompt action is taken to protect people against a purely natural incident. A particular alga has flowered at this time of the year off a part of our coast, and as a result of our action no one has suffered any injury to health.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Will my right hon. and learned Friend take it from me, as one who is the same age as the hon. Member for Wansbeck (Mr. Thompson), was brought up on the north-east coast, lives there now and is a member of the Select Committee on the Environment, that the problem of natural algae has been known in the north-east for a long time? Is it not odd that, in the previous private notice question, everyone was being clever after the event, but my right hon. and learned Friend is now criticised for being clever before the event? The latter is the way that I prefer it.

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He and I know that, in 1968, toxin levels were high and there was a serious outbreak of poisoning that led to the illness of 78 people. It is not just a stomach upset, for if people eat the shellfish, they are also prone to a serious paralytic disease.

I agree with my hon. Friend that, had the Departments concerned not worked closely together to issue a prompt warning, we would quite rightly be answering criticisms today about our neglect of our duty and of public health. It is somewhat idiotic for people to scratch about today trying to criticise a prompt response to a worrying problem.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have a busy day ahead of us. I shall call two more hon. Members from each side; then we must move on to subsequent business.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): Is the Minister aware that fishermen in my area believe that the dumping of sewage off the isle of May contributes to the poison that occurs in the estuary of the firth of Forth, which contaminates shellfish and other fish? Obviously that is unacceptable. It is all very well to condemn Lothian region or the city of Edinburgh, but the answer is to provide resources so that, instead of a ship depositing the poison into the sea, a fully fledged sewage works is established to handle the sewage from the city of Edinburgh. Will the Minister and his Scottish colleagues ensure that money is made available for the people of my area?

Mr. Clarke: Obviously I have respect for the fishermen in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. Attempts have been made to study previous years to see if there is any correlation between the years when the algae bloomed to produce high levels of toxin and those when nutrients, including nutrients from sewage, have existed at a high level in the North sea. *[Interruption.]* To those algae, sewage is nutrient. There is no correlation between the two. The algae appear to bloom naturally when certain conditions of temperature, tide and so on occur, as have occurred this year. There is no scientific evidence to link that with any sort of pollution.

I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's remarks about sewage to the attention of the Minister responsible. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that this country has an excellent record of improving systems for the disposal of sewage and of improving our rate of dumping into the sea.

Sir Hector Munro (Dumfries): Of course my right hon. and learned Friend is right to give advance warning of problems, but does he accept that such warnings often affect the west coast fisheries, from which supplies are perfectly normal and okay? The public have listened to snippets of information on the radio and read snippets in the newspapers. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it would have been better for one of the three Ministries to make the announcement rather than having one make it and the other two follow it up? If we spoke with one voice, perhaps we would be clearer.

Mr. Clarke: Only one Department made the announcement, but I am grateful if the other two Departments agreed with what we said, as they were involved in the decision. We issued a clear warning, which was clear about the geography as well. It is true that the particular alga has never bloomed south or west of the Humber in our history. Our statement tried to make it clear that the problem existed only between Montrose and the Humber. MAFF has continued to monitor other waters in case, for the first time, the alga blooms in other waters, but there is no evidence that it is occurring outside the affected area.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): In spite of his somewhat blustering response to my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) the right hon. and learned Gentleman must accept that, between the Saturday and the Wednesday, there was a complete dearth of specific information. Attempts to get more detailed information in the interests of fishermen and other marine users was unsuccessful. That is not an allegation but a fact, and the Secretary of State should accept it.

Does he also accept that the failure to give specific information probably contributed to the blanket ban on shellfish from the north-east of Scotland to the considerable detriment of marginal fishing ports in that area and small-time fishermen who catch shellfish? The heavy-handed approach to this matter has depressed the entire shellfish market in Scotland. It is essential for public opinion to understand that most shellfish coming from the east coast are entirely safe and that all the shellfish caught off the west coast, including mussels, are entirely safe.

Mr. Clarke: I do not accept what the hon. Gentleman says about the availability of Ministers, officials or information during the time he is describing. Indeed, I am assured that the Minister for Health and the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food were talking to each other on the telephone on Saturday morning and were available, as were all the experts, and that there was no lack of information in our clear statements.

I am glad to give the hon. Gentleman the reassurance he seeks about shellfish from other parts of our shores. This problem does not exist except on the stretch of coast between Montrose and the Humber. Indeed, it never has occurred west or south of the Humber.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware of the concerns of the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations that the French are apparently, and perhaps typically, trying to get some commercial advantage out of this situation by imposing additional requirements on imports of crab from other parts of the United Kingdom through additional documentation requirements? Are the Government, particularly through the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, taking steps to deal with that situation?

Mr. Clarke: I believe that the French have behaved quite disgracefully on the question of beef, but at the moment I am prepared to give them the benefit of the doubt on shellfish—although I accept, as my hon. Friend says, that apparently there have been difficulties over the export of shellfish to France.

The Minister responsible for fisheries tells me that he has been in touch with the French authorities to try to sort it out. He is able to offer a system of certification to the French giving the source of crabs and other shellfish being supplied to the French market. We are confident that the matter can be sorted out with the active co-operation of the French authorities who, as I said earlier, I believe have had to impose a similar ban on some of their shellfisheries in the estuary of the Rhone.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware of the disruption that has occurred in the markets for these market-sensitive products? Will he publish the evidence about which he has been talking and which scientists at Weymouth have been producing? How soon does he expect to lift the warning on crab? When he does that, will he give as much prominence to the fact that it has been lifted as to the adverse publicity it received when the warning went on?

Mr. Clarke: I will of course—I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister of State, whose Ministry carries out the tests, will agree with me—publish the evidence on which it is based. But I issue the warning, which I am sure the hon. Gentleman will share with me, that, when we publish the evidence, it should not be immediately be seized on by the pseudo-experts trying to claim that the danger extends beyond the point of which we have already warned. That is always a danger whenever my Department or any other tries to issue scientific information about problems of this kind. But I assure the hon. Gentleman that we shall issue the evidence and I believe that it will reassure him about the action that we took.

Mr. Kirkwood: When will it be published?

Mr. Clarke: We will publish the evidence as soon as possible; I am not sure why we cannot issue it more or less straight away. MAFF is continuing to monitor crabs. Low levels of toxin are occurring. As soon as it is clear that there is no risk of high levels of toxin occurring in crabs, the warning will immediately be lifted.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): We have always said that action must be taken to protect consumers in cases of this kind and that a precautionary principle in matters of food safety must apply in cases of doubt. Having said that, the Minister must be fair and accept that there has been unreasonable delay in dealing with the testing of crabs and in giving out information.

Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept that it was impossible to get information out of MAFF until the Wednesday after the bank holiday? Neither I nor the NFFO could obtain information. Does he further accept that crab samples from South Tyneside council were not taken by the Department for processing because it was a bank holiday? One would have thought that, when dealing with a public health matter of this type, some priority would have been given to dealing with such issues.

Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman confirm that independent tests on crabs obtained by fishermen have been ignored? Given all the delays and muddles, will he accept that fishermen deserve an ex gratia payment as compensation for the losses that they have sustained through no fault of their own?

Mr. Clarke: I do not usually face the hon. Gentleman, but the Opposition must decide whether they are shocked by the Government's lack of concern for food safety or by the fact that we take action when there is evidence of danger concerning food. Frankly, Opposition Members are trying to feed a mood of vague public alarm, when we have a perfectly straightforward case of a phenomenon that is familiar in the north-east and over which the Government have acted promptly and thoroughly.

It is not true to say that there was any difficulty in obtaining information. Perhaps in future the hon. Gentleman should consult my hon. Friend the Minister responsible for fisheries about how to communicate on such matters to obtain the information that he requires. We have an effective system for protecting public safety, and it has worked on this occasion. I think that the public are more sensible than either their politicians or the press on such subjects. Most people respect actions of the kind that we have taken, which are based on medical and scientific fact and not on spurious alarms or spurious complaints.

NEW MEMBER

The following Member made the Affirmation required by law:

Michael Carr Esq., for Bootle.

Football Licensing Authority

4.31 pm

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the failure of the Government to make appointments to the Football Licensing Authority on 1 June 1990."

The matter is specific, since today is the first opportunity for hon. Members to raise the matter of the failure of the Government to make the necessary appointments of chairman and eight members of this body by the date set by the Government themselves in a commencement order on 21 March. In a written answer to me on 8 May 1990, the Minister of State, Home Office said that the FLA would be set up on 1 June. I wrote to the Minister on 11 May pressing upon him the urgent need for these appointments to be made. I regret to say that I have not even received a reply to that letter. Now the Home Office has informed me that the appointments have not been made.

The urgency of the need for the FLA to commence operations is clear. Football clubs and local authorities cannot begin work on converting grounds to all-seated accommodation until the FLA, which will have the responsibility for granting licences to clubs to admit spectators, is in operation. They feel that the deadline set by Lord Justice Taylor and the Government for this urgent safety work is tight if not impossible.

The Government cannot argue that they are not aware of the seriousness of the situation. In the aftermath of the disaster at Hillsborough, the Prime Minister told the House:

"I suggest that the House should not delay a legislative measure to enable us to take advantage of Lord Justice Taylor's recommendations for another 12 months, and that it would be negligent to do so."—[*Official Report*, 20 April 1989; Vol. 151, c. 456.]

For once, the Prime Minister was right, but 13 months later the Home Office itself is preventing the implementation of the legislation by its failure to make appointments to the FLA, and that is nothing short of disgraceful. In January, the Home Secretary told the House:

"Those clubs that have not faced up to their responsibility now have a final opportunity to do so; and if they do not now act, the public will not forgive them."—[*Official Report*, 29 January 1990; Vol. 166, c. 22.]

The football authorities have been proving that they are anxious to meet these tough deadlines. They have instituted four working groups to implement the Taylor proposals but are being prevented from putting them into action by the failure of the Government to face their responsibility.

If the Home Secretary and the Prime Minister need any further convincing of the seriousness of the situation, they have only to heed the words of the Minister for Sport:

"If we do not have the legislative vehicle in place, we would not be in a position to give clubs as much time as possible to meet the timetable outlined in the report."—[*Official Report*, 30 January 1990; Vol. 166, c. 257.]

For those reasons, the House should adjourn to discuss this specific and important matter.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the failure of the Government to make appointments to the Football Licensing Authority on 1 June 1990."

I listened with care to what the hon. Gentleman said. As he knows, the decision I have to take is whether to give his submission precedence over the business set down for today or tomorrow. In this case, the matter that he has raised does not meet the criteria of the standing order. Therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House.

Points of Order

4.35 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, for you, Mr. Speaker. So far as I am aware, no Frenchman has ever died as a result of the privilege of eating delicious British beef. However, many of our fellow countrymen have died or been maimed as a result of driving round in their second-rate, badly assembled and unsafe vehicles. Could you, as the champion of this House, tell us what rights the House has to enforce the European ruling that the French should not obstruct the movement of British beef? Alternatively, what powers does the House have to prevent the flood of European second-rate shambolic imports into this country? If we have no powers, could you——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I can tell the hon. Gentleman that I am afraid that I have no such powers. I wish that I had.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. When hon. Members make speeches on a subject in which they might have an interest, it is expected that they declare that interest. In the past several months, incidents have arisen of Ministers making speeches about privatisation and then going on to get jobs in various concerns. I refer to the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), who took part in the privatisation of British Telecom and——

Mr. Speaker: Order. What is the point of order for me?

Mr. Skinner: Let me finish. Then there was the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler), who took a job with the National Freight Consortium. Then there was the last one——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not remotely responsible for any jobs that right hon. Members might take.

Mr. Skinner: I am just explaining it.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is taking a long time to do it. He must raise a point of order on a matter for which I have responsibility. I have no responsibility for granting these jobs.

Mr. Skinner: In the last case, the right hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker) went to a job in British Gas. I propose that, in the future, as a matter of order, when Ministers make statements about privatisation plans, they declare their interest in taking jobs later on.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has abused the process of raising points of order. This has nothing to do with me.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The sad demise of the Social Democratic party over the weekend brings to light——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not a matter for me, either. We have an important debate ahead and I shall have to propose a 10-minute limit on speeches. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will not wish to keep any of his colleagues from making a speech in that debate.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it a point of order for me?

Mr. Banks: Of course it is; otherwise I would not have raised it.

In a moment, assuming that we can make progress, the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) will move a ten-minute Bill. I congratulate him on being fortunate enough to be able to use this valuable procedural move to raise an important issue. The point of order for you is this, Mr. Speaker. A week or so ago, the hon. Members for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton) and for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) combined, in a stand-up, jokey fashion, to abuse the ten-minute Bill procedure. As you know, Back-Benchers treat these Bills seriously. I have managed to steer one towards the statute book, and it will be discussed on Report soon. That shows that it is possible to use this procedure to enact a measure.

I am concerned that we may be about to have a repeat of that exercise of a week ago, in which one Conservative Member will move the Bill, not intent on carrying it any further, and another Conservative Member will speak after him. Together, they will make a few puerile jokes and then the Bill will be dropped. I do not begrudge any hon. Member the use of any device that is available to raise issues, but I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to make it clear that you are not prepared to see the ten-minute Bill procedure abused by hon. Members to such an extent that the Procedure Committee may decide to take it away from us.

Mr. Speaker: If the hon. Gentleman is alleging that, he should draw it to the attention of the Procedure Committee. However, what happened on that day was in order. The hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) rose to oppose the Bill, and that is within our procedures. It is up to the House to decide whether this type of debate—which takes time out of important debates that follow—is worth while. We have such a debate today. As I have said, I shall have to impose a 10-minute limit on speeches—

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: —or a five-minute limit, if I take all these points of order.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Apart from the fact that it ill behoves the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) to condemn anyone else for frivolity in the Chamber, I wish to raise the important question of individual Members' rights. I know that you, Mr. Speaker, are most solicitous about protecting the rights of individual Back Benchers, both in the House and when they visit other places.

With that in mind, Mr. Speaker, and especially because of your relationships with other Parliaments around the world, will you look into the inability of the hon. Members for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) and for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) to visit the Chinese People's Republic? As you know, Mr. Speaker, they were offloaded from a bus at Macau on the grounds that they were too left-wing to be allowed into the people's Communist republic. Will you tell your counterpart in the Chinese People's Assembly that if we, as an open democracy, must put up with mad left wingers in our country——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That has absolutely nothing to do with me. Although I hope at some time to meet my Chinese counterpart, I do not think I shall raise that matter with him.

Mr. Ron Brown (Edinburgh, Leith): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Lothian health board is in crisis because of financial malpractice and underfunding. There is also evidence of corruption involving the "Hibs" football club from Edinburgh. Many people are concerned about the takeover bid by the Tory spiv Wallace Mercer —[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."]—yes, a Tory spiv.

Although the two cases are different, we need the Scottish Law Officers here to explain their legal aspects. We have had that opportunity before, but now it is being denied. What can we do about it? Can we summon the Lord Advocate or the Solicitor-General for Scotland? We require them; they should be here.

Mr. Speaker: As an hon. Member with a football club in his constituency—the Crystal Palace club—I have some sympathy with what the hon. Gentleman has said; however, I cannot help him.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I raise a point relating to what you said in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover, (Mr. Skinner)—that you had no responsibility for circumstances in which Ministers who propose legislation and vote for it subsequently become financially involved in the companies that the legislation is designed to create?

Select Committee reports in 1974-75 set out a number of criteria that hon. Members must follow, and it is part of your responsibility, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that hon. Members follow those rules. One of the rules clearly says that hon. Members must declare an interest when they directly have one, or might be thought to have one. I hope that you, Mr. Speaker, will set an example to the House and call on Ministers to declare any intention of gaining financial well-being. Some hon. Members think that the current standards of behaviour, and the financial malpractice in the House, are beginning to recall the venal practices of the 18th-century Parliaments.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is asking me to divine what may happen in the future. I could not possibly be expected to make such judgment about what any hon. Members, whether from the Front Benches or the Back Benches, might do in the future. I am concerned with order in the Chamber today.

National Audit Office (Extension of Powers)

4.44 pm

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to extend the powers of the National Audit Office so as to permit the office, on an application by a national political party, to cost that party's election commitments.

In 1983, the Labour party lost the general election after producing what was described as the longest suicide note in history. In the past 18 months, it has produced a series of policy documents, which can best be described as the longest shopping list in history: a shopping list that is notably without prices.

My Bill would enable the Labour party, through an independent office, to cost its promises. It could cost not only the direct effect of its pledges, but the hidden costs —the knock-on effects on the British economy. The Labour document "Meet the Challenge: Make the Change" would perhaps be better described as "See the charges and count your change". The document lists no fewer than 171 promises, which would cost the British taxpayer and the economy dear. However, only two of the promises have a price tag, and those are priced at £1·5 billion less than the stockbroking firm UBS Phillips and Drew calculates. It calculates that the total bill to date of Labour promises made in the two documents—"Meet the Challenge: Make the Change" and "Looking to the Future"—would be £19·5 billion.

The Public Policy Unit, in its report on Labour's plans, says:

"It is impossible to estimate precisely how much Labour's commitments would cost and, because it is deliberately vague as to when their policies would be enacted, it is difficult to estimate the scale of the inflationary pressure which would build up."

The authors go on to point out:

"Local Government spending, for example, which amounts to £40 billion can impose a terrific drain on Government resources and there is some doubt as to whether a Labour Government could control, or would have the will amongst its ranks to control local government spending."

Labour, as always, remains a high-spending, high-taxing party. It has voted against every reduction in income tax since 1979. Had tax rates remained at 33p in the pound, as Labour wanted, a married man on average earnings would today be paying £20 a week—or £1,000 a year—more to the Chancellor. The biggest con in Labour's proposals is that it promises the earth, yet pretends it will not hurt. Even on Labour's own vague figures, a 50p top tax rate plus a 9 per cent. national insurance would mean that someone earning £18,200 a year would pay more tax, which would lead to higher bills for 3·5 million people.

However, the reality is far worse than the Labour party will admit. The City firm CSFB calculates that a childless couple on £6,000 a year would lose £4·10 a week; that the freezing of the higher tax rate would drag more people into Labour's new higher rate tax bands; and that single people, and many couples, earning £17,000 a year or more would have a dramatic increase in marginal rates—for example, a married man on £24,000 a year with two children would be £24·84 a week worse off under the Labour's tax proposals.

The Public Policy Unit report concurs with the CSFB finding:

"Not even the most punitive taxes on the better off will raise enough revenue to finance all of this."

It continues:

"The results of some of Labour's more punitive tax proposals may well be to cause people to question what point there is in earning extra income if the majority of that money is taken away even before they even see it."

Like the Bourbons of old, Labour has learnt nothing and forgotten nothing. Under the Government, the reduction of the top rate of tax to 40p in the pound has led to an increase in the percentage rate paid by the top band tax payers, which has risen from a quarter to nearly a third of all tax revenues. Under the Labour proposals, taxpayers in Scotland would face an additional threat from a tax-raising Scottish Assembly.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): What about the poll tax?

Mr. Bennett: As for local government taxation—the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) is a Labour spokesman on local government—we shall wait with interest to hear Labour's proposals. We are not prepared to take any criticism from a party that cannot produce any alternative to the community charge. Labour's proposals for a roof tax would lead to massive increases in taxation.

On Labour's own calculations, the imposition of a national minimum wage at 50 per cent. of male earnings would mean wage increases for 4 million people—one sixth of the work force. Given that about one third of public spending is on wages and salaries, that would have a considerable impact on the public sector. The impact on other groups of workers would be for the newly empowered trade unions to demand wage rises throughout the economy.

Labour's policies would place new and crippling burdens on industry. It proposes a new state bank—the British investment bank—which would offer low-cost, long-term finance to firms unable to raise money from commercial banks. Nor would pension funds be safe, as their trustees would be encouraged by changes in the law to take the interests of their regional economies into account. In addition, there would be a range of regional and, where appropriate, local investment banks for Britain's nations and regions. Those, together with local enterprise boards and something called British Technology Enterprise, would have the power to take shares in existing companies.

Some would call all that a throwback to the 1970s, when Mr. De Lorean successfully conned the then Labour Government out of a cool £80 million. Others have pointed to the late and unlamented Greater London Council-controlled Greater London enterprise board, which so successfully lost ratepayers' money. Frankly, the origins are even older—way back in the 1940s, with the men in Whitehall knowing best. As Sir John Harvey-Jones, the former chairman of ICI, said succinctly:

"Whenever Government directs industry the thing invariably comes to grief . . . Governments which try to pick winners are not very good at it."

Labour's promise to renationalise British Telecom and the water industry, with the gas and electricity industries also in its sights, would not only rob millions of ordinary people who had invested some of their hard-earned savings in the success of those industries of their dividends but, by excluding the dividends, would cause share prices to plummet, enabling Labour to renationalise on the cheap.

We must study the hidden costs for industrial relations. Labour would bring back sympathy strikes and flying pickets. It makes no mention in its policy document of the right of trade union members to elect their leaders by secret ballot. The effect on the economy would be absolutely disastrous. As in the past, Labour is in the hands of the trade unions when it comes to industrial relations.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monkland, East (Mr. Smith) and the hon. Members for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), for Redcar (Ms. Mowlam) and for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) have eaten their way around the City of London—and to what effect? *The Times Business News* on 25 May reports Mr. Roger Bootle of Greenwell Montague as saying:

"The difficult thing for Labour is how to reconcile an anti-inflation policy with its undoubted spending ambitions."

Mr. Neil Mackinnan of Yamaichi Securities, an economic consultant to Labour, conceded that the City was probably still sceptical about Labour's taxation and tax policies. All those post-prandial tummy upsets and all the Alka Seltzers, only to be told that. Perhaps those hon. Members should have left it to the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). He, at least, would have enjoyed the lunches, if not the duty.

The Labour party's proposals include its defence policy. It is many years since the words "Labour party" and "defence" have sat comfortably with each other. Labour is led by a leader who is a committed member of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament—an organisation whose constitution begins with the words:

"The aim of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament is the unilateral abandonment by Britain of nuclear weapons, nuclear bases and nuclear alliances."

Labour now speaks of a peace dividend. That is barefaced cheek from people who have opposed all the measures that have brought the Societ Union to the negotiating table. "Looking to the Future" contains no figures for what the Labour party will do, but we know from its last party conference that it is committed to a reduction of £5 billion in the defence budget.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Not enough.

Mr. Bennett: The hon. Gentleman might say, "Not enough," but £5 billion is one third of the total defence budget. Perhaps he will tell us whether the Navy, the Army or the Air Force will be scrapped.

The reality is that, every time a Labour spokesman opens his mouth, uncosted promises come tumbling out. In every vote in this House, whether on cuts in income tax, denationalisation, the repeal of the archaic dock labour scheme or trade union reform, Labour has consistently voted against efficiency and reform. It was ever thus. Labour politicians who have dedicated a lifetime's service to the creation of bureaucracy, nationalised industries and Government interference cannot change their spots, whatever the advice or instruction of Mr. Mandelson. It would be only a skin-deep change, because underneath they would remain the same old——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The hon. Gentleman has exceeded his time.

4.54 pm

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): It is a great pity that one of the few opportunities for Back-Bench Members to oppose or to introduce measures has been

[Mr. Graham Allen]

prostituted in the way that it has this afternoon. I regret that the very good name of the National Audit Office has been dragged into this. It is an impartial and highly professional body that has produced numerous reports exposing Government inadequacies and waste in a number of areas.

The hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) sought to repeat a joke that might have been good the first time around, but which has fallen flat the second time. He should consider the scope of his Bill. Had it gone a little further, a number of Opposition Members might have been prepared to support it. However, the hon. Gentleman stopped short of looking at the Government's record before the last three general elections. It would have been a marvellous Bill had it been on the statute book in 1979. We could then have costed some of the commitments that the Government have enacted while they have been in power—not merely the financial cost and the waste, but the social cost. With a large number of their commitments, it is too little, too late.

Why was not the commitment to almost double VAT costed? Indeed, why was it not even in the 1979 manifesto? Why were not the commitments on income tax and other indirect taxes costed? The tax burden on the individual has risen, not fallen. The Government myth of reduced taxation has been exposed. Why did not the Government include in their manifesto, and why did they not cost, their intention to reduce the real value of child benefit? Why was not the National Audit Office invited to cost the Tory manifesto so that their false claims could be exposed?

As my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) asked, why was not the poll tax costed? Why were not the financial effects of the poll tax on every household costed and made clear to the British people? Why was not the National Audit Office asked to do that job? Despite its great professionalism, the National Audit Office could not have carried out such an audit, because even the Secretary of State for the Environment has his knickers in a twist on that issue.

Why did not the National Audit Office produce a few calculations, perhaps using the Treasury model, on the cost to the nation of high interest rates? As my hon. Friend the Member for Normanton said, they would have made interesting calculations, especially in relation to the high mortgage levels. In my constituency, that cost—not costed in the Tory manifesto—amounts to an additional £200 a month on average for every mortgage holder. No doubt it is the same in other constituencies.

Why was not the effect of the ridiculous sporadic and crazy exchange rate policy on British industry costed? What about bankruptcies? Why was not the demise of the Raleigh company in my constituency costed? It started in 1979 with 11,000 employees but now has only 1,000. What was the cost for those 10,000 former employees—not merely in dole, not merely in misery, but in lost taxation?

Why did not someone in the Tory party think up this marvellous Bill before now? It does not even touch upon the social costs. It is a little joke; a little sprat. The old-age pensioner has seen the real value of the pension decline. How can we cost the misery that that has created? How can we cost the cuts in benefits for the disabled and the unemployed—those who have lost their jobs as a result of the Government's incompetence? Perhaps the great professionals at the National Audit Office could cost all that. It would be a job well worthy of their talents.

The National Audit Office could evaluate the cost of pit and factory closures and the decline in our manufacturing industry. One third of our manufacturing industry has been disposed of by the Government. The shipyards have been closed. When we look around us, we see the immense cost in human resources of giving away our international competitive position.

The Government go on about waste, and rightly so. They can teach us a lot about waste. They have wasted £48 billion of North sea oil revenue. It has been frittered away abroad and given away in income tax cuts to try to compensate for the indirect taxation—VAT, national insurance and so on.

The hon. Gentleman asks why we do not cost our programme. I have to say:

> "It would be irresponsible, and anyway impossible, to say . . . precisely how much it will cost. We do not have the advice which is available in government from professional advisers; we do not know what the world situation—or the domestic economic situation—will be when we come to office".

[Interruption.] Conservative Members may laugh, but that is a quote from "The Right Approach" written by the Conservative party in 1976. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) for pointing that out to me. I shall send the Member for Pembroke a copy of that document so that he can memorise the quote.

The National Audit Office produced a good report a couple of weeks ago on the Government's failure to collect income tax. If an old lady gets 2p extra on her pension or in benefit to which she is not entitled, a team of people come looking to see whether she is scrounging on social security, but £5 billion is lost to the Inland Revenue and nothing is done about it, and that does not include tax evasion. If we are talking about costing programmes and failures, let the National Audit Office report on that sort of loss, which is totally unaccounted for by the Government.

Were such profligacy, waste and incompetence the responsibility of a local councillor, he would be surcharged, and rightly so. He would probably be bankrupted and have his home taken away from him and his assets and property arrested. But here, such people are promoted. They become members of the Cabinet and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) pointed out from a sedentary position 10 minutes ago, they end up with knighthoods or stacks of rewards from the City.

If we are to look to the future, I would extend the hon. Gentleman's Bill in a number of areas. I would cost the Government's promise to save the 72 marginal Tory seats that are being pumped up with additional revenue to keep their poll tax low. I would ensure that the National Audit Office examined the Tory party's accounts. It seems a little slow in putting those accounts into Companies house. I would ensure that the National Audit Office examined every company's accounts so that we could see that companies such as British Commonwealth, which is sliding down the tubes at the moment, donate six-figure sums year after year to their friends in the Conservative party.

Let us cost the Conservative party's programme—the poll tax and the privatisation of water, electricity and of

British Telecom. Above all, let us ensure that the real financial and social cost of every item in the Tory party manifesto is exposed. In that way, the British people, with the assistance of the National Audit Office, will be able to make a choice at the next general election.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have just heard an extraordinary speech from the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) in opposition to the Bill, but in his closing comments he urged support of it. Is it not the case that a Member can oppose a ten-minute Bill but not speak in support of it?

Mr. Allen: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am clearly opposed to the Bill, because it does not go far enough. It does not include past spending commitments which have been concealed by the Conservative party.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): What has happened is quite in order. If an hon. Member seeks to oppose a ten-minute Bill, he must shout, "No." It is not necessary for him to go further than that, and that was done in this case.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Nicholas Bennett, Mr. Donald Thompson, Mr. David Martin, Mr. Alan Amos, Mr. Alistair Burt, Mr. Gary Waller, Mr. Robert Jones, Mr. Colin Shepherd, Mr. Gwilym Jones, Mr. James Pawsey, Mr. William Hague and Mr. Geoffrey Dickens.

NATIONAL AUDIT OFFICE (EXTENSION OF POWERS)

Mr. Nicholas Bennett accordingly presented a Bill to extend the powers of the National Audit Office so as to permit the office, on an application by a national political party, to cost that party's election commitments: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on 6 July and to be printed. [Bill 154.]

The Army

[Relevant document: Sixth Report from the Defence Committee of Session 1989-90 on the Physical Security of Military Installations in the United Kingdom, House of Commons Paper 171.]

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I remind the House that in view of the large number of right hon. and hon. Members who wish to speak, Mr. Speaker has imposed a 10-minute limit on speeches between 7 pm and 9 pm.

5.6 pm

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): We are in the midst of a period of profound and lasting change. Across eastern Europe socialism has been discredited as people have come to understand that only misery comes from centralised economies and national plans and the pursuit of egalitarianism—in fact, the policies pursued by successive Labour Governments in Britain since the war.

The changes that we have seen have not occurred by accident; they are the result of a gradual realisation in the Soviet Union that it was impossible to match the technology of the west while at the same time providing its people with a decent standard of living.

I believe that historians will judge that there were significant milestones down the road to new thinking on Soviet defence strategy—first, the deployment of cruise and Pershing missiles across Europe. That demonstrated the determination of the NATO alliances to match Soviet capabilities and to risk the short-term unpopularity from their publics when doing so.

The second milestone was President Reagan's announcement that America was prepared to spend billions of dollars on the strategic defence initiative and to invest in new areas of technology that might not only give the west an impregnable shield from incoming ballistic missiles, but, much more likely, lead to a spin-off of revolutionary weapon systems that could radically alter the balance of power.

At that point the Soviets realised that they were involved in a race that they could never win. There was only one way out and that was by negotiation—serious negotiations to remove a whole range of intermediate nuclear forces, to reduce radically strategic weapons and to bring down the superior numbers of Soviet conventional forces.

The interesting thing about those two important milestones—the deployment of cruise and Pershing and the launching of the SDI programme—is that they were both bitterly opposed by the Labour party, which was wrong on defence policy then in the same way that it is wrong now.

We have, of course, seen in recent months a series of extraordinary developments in eastern Europe, and in the relations between the countries of eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Those have already brought about fundamental changes in the European political and security landscape, many of which appear irreversible, and more changes are inevitable.

The most significant change will be the impending unification of Germany, which we warmly welcome and

[Mr. Archie Hamilton]

which has been one of NATO's long-standing objectives. The German Government now appear to envisage all-German elections in December or January, with state unity likely to take place shortly before that. This makes it all the more important that we make good progress in the two-plus-four talks and ensure that we resolve the external and security aspects of unification in parallel with the internal aspects.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): The Minister has made a grand opening to his speech. Can he say whether he is now announcing that a proper defence review is being undertaken—or is the situation to continue whereby one Minister undertakes such a review with the opposition of the Secretary of State for Defence and presumably that of the Minister of State for the Armed Forces?

Mr. Hamilton: Clearly, the work that we are doing on options for change is an aspect that I shall cover later in my speech.

As to the central question of a united Germany's membership of NATO, both the East German and West German Governments have made clear firm support for that, as have other NATO countries and some east European countries. But while we do not regard a united Germany's right to choose membership of NATO as negotiable—it is enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act—we want to ensure that the Soviet Union's security concerns are properly met and have no wish to exploit the situation to the Soviet Union's disadvantage.

The process of change in security in the Soviet Union and in eastern Europe to some extent predates the political transformation that has taken place since the historic events in Berlin last November. There were clear signs before then that the Soviet Union was making changes in its defence posture and force levels. In December 1988, President Gorbachev announced his intention to make significiant unilateral reductions in Soviet forces, including cuts of 500,000 men, 10,000 tanks, 8,500 artillery pieces and 800 aircraft. Our evidence suggests that those reductions are now well under way across the whole Soviet Union.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): My hon. Friend rightly says that we must take account of Soviet concerns and fears, but will he confirm that in no way will those concerns and fears be allayed by a decision by the Americans at some future stage not to deliver to this country the commitment that it has given to Trident?

Mr. Hamilton: Yes, I think that there is rapid realisation in the Soviet Union, as there has always been here, that the stalemate produced by the ownership of nuclear weapons by both sides is not as unsatisfactory as might have been thought in the past. I hope sincerely that the Soviets are now moving away from the concept of a nuclear-free Europe.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): The Minister will acknowledge that nuclear-owning powers are not the only states in the world, and that 139 non-nuclear countries have signed the United Nations nuclear non-proliferation treaty. Are they to be denied the operation of clause 6 of that treaty for the indefinite future? As the Minister knows, that clause commits nuclear nations to negotiate in good faith the removal of nuclear weapons. Why are not the British Government doing something about getting rid of Trident, in order to honour and conform with the obligations contained in that treaty?

Mr. Hamilton: I am well aware of the contents of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, but it is somewhat idealistic to believe that there will ever be a time when the world will be free of all nuclear weapons. It is one of the many illusions of the unilateralist wing of the Labour party—I say wing, but it seems to me that it makes up most of the party—that we shall somehow reach the point at which there will be a non-nuclear world. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman accepts that the reality is that we are seeing a spread of and an increase in the ownership of nuclear weapons in the world, not a decrease.

Mr. Cryer: Does the Minister welcome that development?

Mr. Hamilton: Certainly not, but it is a fact with which we have to live. I do not want to be in a position in this country in which Libya has a nuclear weapon and we have none—yet that is the point towards which current Labour policy is taking us.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): If the British Government believe that they should not exploit German unification in the way that the Minister said, and if it is suggested that eastern Europe, as part of NATO, would have no NATO deployment at all within the East German zone, is the Minister suggesting as an alternative that there should be no NATO placings within Germany over and above those currently available in West Germany?

Mr. Hamilton: As the hon. Gentleman knows, we are still in the early stages of the two-plus-four talks, and the whole question of what troops should be in eastern Germany, and what will happen in respect of the withdrawal of Soviet troops from there, has to be agreed. Presumably we shall see a united Bundeswehr, including forces of the NVA, at the same time as there is a united Germany or subsequently. However, at present it is difficult to anticipate whether NATO troops will be positioned in East Germany. That remains to be negotiated, and it is what the two-plus-four talks are all about.

Sir Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): Surely it is impossible to have a united Germany in NATO, with our forces in West Germany, and still have—as was said by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) —Russian troops in East Germany, however few they number. One cannot mix the two.

Mr. Hamilton: Yes—clearly that is the way that the talks are going at the moment. The Soviets are considering keeping residual troops in eastern Germany, but I think that they accept that there must be a time limit on the withdrawal of those troops. I personally should not want to be in command of Soviet troops in East Germany after East and West Germany become united. They would not be in a very enviable position. I shall refer to that aspect again later.

More recently, bilateral agreements have been concluded between Hungary and Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, which will see the withdrawal of all 105,000 Soviet troops now in those countries by June 1991. That

process of withdrawals has already begun and there is every sign that it will be completed on time. Although the west has said that it is prepared to contemplate a transitional period during which Soviet troops will remain in what is currently the GDR, it seems unlikely that the Soviets will want to keep their troops there any longer than necessary, given that it will scarcely be a friendly environment. That relates to my earlier reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Sir A. Glyn).

Discussions have also been opened on the possible withdrawal of Soviet forces from Poland. Overall, there seems a good prospect that, by the middle of this decade, if not before, the 500,000 Soviet troops now in central and eastern Europe will be gone.

Moreover, the countries of eastern Europe are also making major reductions in their own forces. In Hungary, for example, there are plans for 40 per cent. reductions in tanks and artillery and a 20 per cent. to 25 per cent. cut in manpower. The Czechoslovakians are cutting manpower numbers and the length of conscription, and are destroying 850 tanks. In Poland, major reductions in tanks, aircraft and artillery are planned, and its armed forces were reduced by about 30,000 last year, with further reductions to follow.

In addition to those major changes in the level and deployment of forces, we are witnessing the disintegration of the Warsaw pact as an effective military organisation. The military risks facing the alliance have already been greatly reduced. As the House will know, NATO is accordingly prepared to make appropriate adjustments to its military readiness. Nevertheless, we must not lose sight of the continuing military imbalance in Europe and of the massive forces that the Soviet Union continues to have at its disposal.

The United Kingdom is playing a full part in the conventional arms control talks in Vienna. I visited those talks last week and was able to discuss with delegates a new British technique for the cheap destruction of tanks. The technique, costing only £50, involves the use of about 30 lb of plastic explosive and has the effect of quickly rendering a tank unusable prior to the more time-consuming process of recycling.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): The Minister suggests that we must keep up the level of our conventional weapons because of the threat, as he sees it, posed by Soviet conventional weapons. However, the Minister just said that the Soviets are likely to withdraw, and want to withdraw, from much of central Europe anyway. If the Soviet Union intended to use conventional weapons against a united Germany and the west, is it not true that it would have to fight its way through to the western lines? Did the Minister take that into account when considering what he calls the imbalance of conventional forces?

Mr. Hamilton: Clearly, that is something that one has to take into account. The reaction of Polish forces if the Soviets were to drive through Poland would have to be taken into account. That also affects warning time and the period that we would need to reinforce, which must be revised in the light of a future when Soviet forces might be concentrated within the Soviet Union, or possibly even further back than the western military districts, which cover such areas as the Ukraine.

The conventional forces in Europe talks aim to eliminate the Soviet and Warsaw pact acknowledged superiority in key types of offensive military equipment, reducing overall holdings on both sides to below NATO's current levels. Accordingly, we expect the United Kingdom, including the British Army, to take an equitable proportion of the reductions that will be made in holdings of some equipment.

The Vienna talks continue to offer the best means of permanently and verifiably reducing conventional forces in Europe, to the benefit of all concerned. We are therefore, in common with our allies, committed to seeing those talks through to a successful conclusion. Although we have recently seen some slowing of progress, the signs continue to be that the Soviets, like us, remain committed to achieving the completion of a CFE agreement this year.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): With regard to the possible reductions of British forces and the number based in western Germany, is the Ministry of Defence examining certain areas of Scotland with a view to using them to train Army personnel, and especially as tank training grounds? If some British regiments are withdrawn from Germany, are they likely to be located in Scotland?

Mr. Hamilton: It is quite wrong for me to be drawn on the options for change at this stage or on any of the details. I think that the hon. Gentleman is referring to the fact that the Ministry of Defence is always considering areas throughout the United Kingdom, to increase the number of training grounds. We still do not feel, in the light of where we stand today, and without any question of any forces being brought back from Germany, that we have enough training areas, and we should like to extend them if the opportunity arises. Scotland is certainly an area that we have been considering, for example, when estates are up for sale.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): May I press the Minister on the subject, as I understand that the Ministry of Defence had been attempting in recent years to review the amount of land that it holds and not to increase it. Is the Minister now saying that he is seeking to increase the amount of defence land? Are not the ranges at Castlemartin sufficient for training, especially as the German Panzers will not train there any more? I presume that they will not wish to train in this country if our tanks are to move out of Germany.

Mr. Hamilton: The general feeling is that we could do with more training areas, and we have always taken the view that we should like to acquire large areas if they came up for sale and were reckoned to be suitable—the consensus is that we do not have enough.

Apart from CFE, there is also the prospect of progress towards reductions in both nuclear and chemical weapons. In the nuclear area, we can look forward to negotiations to achieve reductions in the number of short-range nuclear weapons deployed in Europe shortly after the signature of a CFE treaty. Encouraging progress was made at the Washington summit, which we hope will lead to an early strategic arms reduction talks agreement. As to chemical weapons, the destruction agreement signed at the summit is an important breakthrough and should provide added impetus to the Geneva negotiations, which have as their aim the global elimination of those weapons.

[Mr. Hamilton]

The changes already taking place in Soviet force levels and deployments, together with the changes in eastern Europe, mean that we face a very different security situation in Europe. Further reductions in Soviet force levels and withdrawals from eastern Europe, together with the progress in arms control agreements, will mean that, by the middle of the decade, the situation will have changed even more radically. So it is right that, both within NATO and nationally, we should be taking a close look at our strategy and force structures.

Indeed, NATO Defence Ministers at the recent Nuclear Planning Group and Defence Planning Committee meetings have already commissioned reviews of nuclear posture and military strategy. However, the basic principles of alliance strategy remain valid. We must continue to deploy an effective mix of nuclear and conventional forces in Europe to preserve security. We must not forget that the Soviet Union—whatever the intentions of its leadership—will continue to be the dominant military power on the continent of Europe. Even when it has reduced to the level under negotiation in Vienna, it will still have 12,000 tanks—by far the largest national force. In addition, it will, of course, continue to retain substantial forces east of the Urals, unconstrained by the current arms control negotiations.

At the same time, the Soviet Union has not escaped the popular pressure for reform sweeping through central and eastern Europe, and the internal strains to which it is subject are clear for all to see. We should therefore not be acting responsibly, when addressing our future military requirements, if we were to ignore the fact that the Soviet Union remains a militarily very powerful, and potentially unstable, neighbour.

So, there are some things that must not change—membership of NATO will continue to be the best means of guaranteeing our security, even though NATO will have to adjust to changed circumstances. NATO is a defensive alliance with no aggressive intent, and there are signs that the eastern European countries, including the Soviet Union, are now beginning to recognise that. It has served us—and Europe—well over the past four decades, and it would be foolish now to consider abandoning the firm commitment to the alliance that has brought us so much progress.

Mr. Tony Banks: Would the Minister consider favourably an application from the Soviet Union to join NATO?

Mr. Hamilton: As NATO was originally set up to oppose the Soviet Union's military power, things would have to change more than they have already before that was a serious proposition.

At the same time we, along with other allies, have made it clear that we see advantage in giving the conference on security and co-operation in Europe an increased role. Our ideas for a CSCE summit were outlined by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in her speech to the Königswinter conference in Cambridge at the end of March. She said that the overall aim for the summit should be

"a major step towards the creation of a great alliance for democracy, which would stretch from the Atlantic to the Urals and beyond".

The summit should sign a CFE agreement and look ahead to the next steps in arms control in Europe. It should also further the principles of democracy, free elections and the rule of law; prosperity, the promotion of market-oriented economic reforms; and stability throughout Europe. CSCE will have an important role to play, but as an addition to, not a substitute for, the NATO alliance.

Nationally, as hon. Members will be aware, we are conducting a review of the options for changes in our force structures and levels, which is designed to ensure that our forces continue to be appropriate in radically changed circumstances. In conducting that, we are, of course, bearing it in mind that, in the transitional period ahead during which we expect the CFE agreement to be implemented and the Soviet withdrawals from eastern Europe to take place, there will continue to be uncertainty and dangers of instability.

In these times of extraordinary change and hope in Europe we should do well to remember that it is always easier to make reductions than to rebuild a capability once it is lost.

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): Perhaps my hon. Friend could put some minds in the House at ease, as hon. Members may be concerned at reports about the future size of the Army, especially the number of infantry battalions deployed. Will he confirm that any changes that come about will definitely be open policy decisions, and that there will not be reductions in the number of infantry units on the basis of a reduction in recruitment programmes or advertising campaigns for new recruits into the Army? Back-door reductions in British infantry will not be tolerated.

Mr. Hamilton: My hon. Friend is trying to draw me on more detailed work and on matters concerning options for change that have not yet been considered. We are still in the early stages of work on options for change, and I cannot be drawn further than that. We have much further to go before the sort of detail that my hon. Friend mentions can be examined.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): Further to that question about reductions, can my hon. Friend assure the House that whatever the size and level of the Army in the future—I quite understand that that has yet to be determined—the regimental system will be maintained, as opposed to the infantry corps system, which is common in some other armies?

Mr. Hamilton: I can give my hon. Friend the undertaking that we shall continue to have regiments in the British Army and that we shall not move over to an enormous army corps.

We must not be afraid to make changes, but we must ensure that we keep in step with the realities of security in Europe. We hope that it will be possible to reduce the numbers of British-stationed personnel, although we should, of course, do so only in full consultation with our allies. None the less, the continued presence of significant British forces in Germany, including a robust and efficient British Army of the Rhine, will be essential as a contribution to collective security.

We are therefore taking great care not to take decisions that could put at risk the Army's capability to do its job. We also continue to make improvements to the Army's organisation wherever we can, to make the most

cost-effective use of resources. In particular, we continue to examine how to make the most efficient use of our personnel, whom we can expect to become an ever more precious resource. Last but not least, we continue a comprehensive programme of modernisation for Army equipment to ensure that, whatever happens, the British Army remains both modern and capable.

If all goes well, the Army will, as I have said, be making some reductions in its holdings of certain types of equipment as a result of the negotiations on conventional forces in Europe. Furthermore, if we succeed in achieving security at somewhat lower force levels, we shall have to take account of the reduced density of any future battlefield.

These are early days, but it seems likely that there will be an increased emphasis on the need for flexibility and mobility. The Army of the future will also need to be able to hit hard and fast, and perhaps at greater ranges. Those requirements will be demanding and we shall need to take careful decisions to ensure that our mix of forces remains the most appropriate. Along with our allies, we shall also consider the scope for extending multinational integration in NATO forces.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend has made a powerful case for flexibility. Reading his mind, am I to understand that we are likely to invest more in helicopters than in armour in future?

Mr. Hamilton: It is almost impossible to make a reference to mobility without my hon. Friend making a pitch for helicopters. We shall take into account his point over the years about the superiority of the helicopter over the tank when we do more detailed work on options for change.

Extending multinational integration in NATO forces would provide a demonstration of political commitment and an opportunity for all nations to share the burdens of collective defence. Apart from the important political factors, multinational formations could offer scope for rationalisation and the effective use of resources, although the advantages of integration will have to be weighed against the operational penalties of differing languages, equipment and methods of operation. It will be important that we choose the right operational level at which formations should be multinational and ensure that the right balance is struck to maintain military effectiveness.

I know that the Army is looking forward to meeting the challenge that change will bring and that it will bring to the task the imagination, determination and professionalism for which the British soldier is rightly renowned throughout the world.

Dr. Godman: Is the Minister satisfied with the counselling provision and the financial assistance given to the widows and families of soldiers killed, for example, on active duty in Northern Ireland or in road accidents in Germany?

Mr. Hamilton: I know that the Army pays great attention to giving such support. If the hon. Gentleman has any reason to believe that those services are not working satisfactorily, he may like to write to me about individual cases. One cannot talk effectively in generalisations on that matter.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): The Minister has given us a traditional, right-wing Tory speech. Will he bear in mind another aspect? There is deep concern over the slaughter of service men by IRA units. Last week, there were the horrifying murders of the Army major in Germany and of the 19-year-old soldier in Lichfield in the west Midlands. How that brings about a united Ireland is wholly beyond my understanding or reasoning. As we recognise that the British Army is faced with a terrorist onslaught, I ask the Minister whether there are further ways to try to safeguard British service men. We all recognise the difficulties, but we should take steps to try to ensure that such innocent lives are not lost.

Mr. Hamilton: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for those remarks. I shall come to Northern Ireland and security later. If there is any lesson to be learnt from IRA outrages, on how we can change our practices to ensure our people's safety, we must learn it. As I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will accept, that becomes more difficult when the strategy of the IRA changes from one outrage to another.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): In view of the deeply felt and sensible view just expressed by the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), it is time that there was a consensus among all parties, including the Labour party, in favour of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989. It is wrong that we should continue to have divisions on the matter.

Mr. Hamilton: I share my hon. Friend's views on the matter. It is sad that the House continues to divide on that important measure, which does much to enhance security in Northern Ireland and which makes the difficult job of the Royal Ulster Constabulary slightly easier.

I have visited dozens of Army units throughout the United Kingdom and overseas during the past 12 months and I know from my meetings with the service men and women that morale is high and the mood optimistic. The Army will, I know, maintain that spirit and build upon it in the years to come. I know that right hon. and hon. Members of all parties will wish to join me in praising the Army's dedication and achievements.

I shall now look at issues of security and operations in Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland remains the Army's largest peacetime commitment. The current strength of the Army in Northern Ireland in support of the RUC comprises 10 Regular Army battalions—about 11,000 personnel—and nine battalions of the Ulster Defence Regiment—about 6,300 personnel. The Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force also continue to make a major contribution to security in Northern Ireland.

In March this year, there was a change in the way in which the Army is deployed in Northern Ireland. A fifth roulement, or short-tour battalion, was deployed to the Province in place of the resident battalion formerly based at Aldergrove, where accommodation had reach the end of its planned life. I can reassure the House that that change has not in any way reduced the level of support provided by the Army to the Chief Constable of the RUC.

I should like to take this opportunity to record my support for those courageous members of the UDR who continue to serve the community in combating terrorism from whatever quarter. The UDR makes a vital and valued contribution to the Army's support to the RUC-led anti-terrorist effort. That contribution has, on occasions, quite wrongly and unjustly been called into question. I am very pleased that Mr. Stevens's report, which, as the

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House will be aware, was published on 17 May, concluded that the passing of information was restricted to a small number of individuals and was neither widespread nor institution-alised. As Mr. Stevens has reported, his inquiry was thorough and wide-ranging, and I hope that his findings will silence those who quite unjustifiably have criticised the UDR as a whole for the misdemeanours of a very few members. The IRA continues to murder and to maim.

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): I must make it clear that many of us with close knowledge of the Ulster Defence Regiment were already convinced of the conclusions at which Stevens would arrive long before they were published. Is not it unfortunate that, at one stage in his investigation, Mr. Stevens had 28 homes identified by having them searched by more than 300 members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary? The lives of 28 members of the UDR and of their families were placed in serious jeopardy. Is not it regrettable that at least one quarter of those people—and probably more—have had to move house because of the threat brought about by the bungling way in which that aspect of the investigation was carried out?

Mr. Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman will accept that it was important that the Stevens inquiry was seen to be carrying out its duties impartially and without any outside influence; otherwise, its findings would have been questioned. In those circumstances, it was important to give him the freedom to act as he thought right. I accept that it was regrettable and that, as a result of raids on people's homes, some people had to be moved, and it would have been better if that could have been avoided.

The IRA continues to murder and maim service personnel. During 1989, 11 Regular Army and two UDR soldiers were murdered by terrorists, and 190 were injured. This year has seen the murder of six UDR soldiers, four of whom were horrifically murdered by an IRA land mine on 9 April, and one regular soldier was murdered by the IRA on 5 May. This year, 70 Regular Army and UDR soldiers have been injured.

The IRA continues to extend its campaign of murder and violence to the mainland and the continent. To mention but a few of the cowardly attacks—11 Royal Marines bandsmen were brutally murdered in a bomb attack at Deal last September; and, during May, one soldier was killed, and one injured and seven civilians were injured in explosions in London. On the continent last year, a soldier was killed in front of his wife and children who were themselves injured; an RAF corporal and his six-month-old baby daughter were murdered; and a soldier's German-born wife was murdered. Those barbarities, horrendous in themselves, serve to illustrate the threat faced by the ordinary people of Northern Ireland, the people on whom the terrorists have inflicted their campaign of violent lawlessness for more than 20 years.

Last Friday night, the terrorists committed two further sickening atrocities—the callous shooting of three unarmed teenage soldiers at Lichfield railway station, killing one, and the ruthless murder of an Army major as he returned home to his family at a housing estate in Dortmund.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): One of the people to whom the Minister referred was my constituent, Private Robert Davies of Waun road, Pontarddulais, an 18-year-old—which is different from the press reports of a 19-year-old boy. He was savagely gunned down. I am privileged to be part of an armed forces parliamentary scheme this year, with the Royal Navy. As part of that scheme, I have been conscious of security problems. I shall certainly not identify them, but I should be very glad if the Minister again considered a review of security, to see not only what lessons can be derived from the shooting but what loopholes exist in security arrangements and what resources need to be diverted to protect our armed forces personnel, who do a marvellous job in peace and in war in protecting this country. The Minister will find that there will be major problems in attracting young men and women to the armed forces and retaining them unless those resources are provided fully to protect them on and off duty.

Mr. Hamilton: First, I am delighted to hear that the hon. Gentleman is on the armed forces scheme. I hope that he is finding it beneficial. Secondly, whenever there is an outrage such as this, we always look to see what lessons can be learnt from it. I do not think that there is anything to be achieved by a massive review of security because we are dealing with a changing pattern of terrorist outrages. Therefore, we must adjust our position as each outrage takes place and see whether there are lessons to be learnt. I shall refer to resources that have been dedicated towards that. I think that the hon. Gentleman will agree that they are massive and should do something to sort out the problem.

Ironically, the fact that the IRA is increasingly searching for so-called soft targets in Britain and on the continent is a measure of the unrelenting pressure being brought to bear on it by the security forces in Northern Ireland. It should be in no doubt, however, that it will be tracked down with similar determination on whichever side of the Channel it chooses to hide. I should like to take this opportunity to praise the rapid response of the West German police to the shooting of Major Dillon-Lee, whose murderers were very nearly captured at a road-block.

The protection of our service men and women is of the very highest priority, and we are continuing to improve security and introduce all practical and cost-effective measures to guard service men against attack wherever they serve and are at threat. As the House will be aware, an additional sum of £126 million was made available last year to fund a major package of security enhancements in Britain and on the continent, including the provision of guards and of physical security measures, such as fences and closed-circuit television and mirrors for searching under vehicles.

It was originally envisaged that the programme would take three years to complete. However, every effort has been made to speed up progress and, for the most part, implementation of the enhancements will have been compressed into two years. Indeed, the majority of the physical enhancements are already in place. For example, at Eltham, had it not been for the use of anti-shatter window film, the number of injuries would have been much greater. That attack demonstrated the effectiveness of such simple and unobtrusive measures.

Urgent consideration is currently being given to the further lessons that can be learnt from recent attacks and the measures that can be implemented against specific threats, although there is, of course, no absolute protection against a violent, determined and ruthless terrorist.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Before the Minister finishes his remarks on Northern Ireland, will he clear up the question of what information about alleged sexual scandals in relation to the Kincora boys home was or was not passed on to Mr. Ian Cameron, a senior officer at headquarters in Northern Ireland? Perhaps in his winding-up speech the Minister will pay some attention to that question.

Mr. Hamilton: We have been endlessly over that ground. As the hon. Gentleman knows, two inquiries have dealt with Kincora and have gone into great detail. Despite the hon. Gentleman's efforts to continue to rake away at the matter, I do not believe that there is any evidence that suggests that evidence has been withheld that would have led to the conviction of the people responsible for those homosexual abuses any earlier than was actually done.

I should like to mention the Defence Select Committee's recent report on the physical security of military installations, which has been included on the Order Paper for this debate. We are grateful to the Committee for its inquiry and report and are pleased that it has recognised the difficulties of providing an effective defence against the terrorist threat. As one would expect, the Defence Committee has taken a rather more sensible view of security than some press commentators, and we shall be making a considered response to the Committee in the usual way.

I should stress again that complete security is unrealistic and that we have therefore to focus on risk management. Simply throwing money at the problem will not solve it. Our intention is that countermeasures against terrorists should be as effective as possible, subject to the requirement that life must, as far as possible, continue as normal. One of the options in providing security is the use of commercial security companies. The Committee had some criticisms of the performance of some of the companies that we use, and we have noted them. But commercial companies will remain one of the options available where they can demonstrate that they provide an adequate service. We continue to keep all contracts with commercial guard forces under the closest scrutiny and monthly reports on the performance of firms are made to my noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces. Since the reviews have been instituted, three contracts have been terminated and a further three will not be renewed.

The callous murder of two Australian holidaymakers in Holland on 27 May has shown that terrorist attacks may also be directed towards the civilian community. In that particular case, the only "excuse" given by the terrorists was that the car had British number plates and they therefore assumed that the two men were soldiers. The House will recall that in 1988, I announced that we were scrapping the distinctive British Forces Germany number plates in favour of UK-style plates. I also said that we would keep the situation under constant review. Since then, with the ready co-operation of the Federal Republic of Germany authorities, to whom we are most grateful, we have decided additionally to provide the choice of German-style number plates for the drivers of left-hand drive cars. I am sure that the House will understand why no advance announcement of our intentions was made. The plates are not being issued and a significant number are already being used. That change should provide a further valuable addition to our range of protective measures. We shall continue to keep the situation under the closest scrutiny.

There is one further point that I should like to cover before moving on. It has been said that the shooting in Roermond, and other similar so-called "mistakes" when the IRA has murdered or maimed civilians, demonstrate the depths to which the IRA has sunk. They are not new depths—the IRA has from the very outset shown that it has no compassion but only total disregard for life, soldier or civilian, man, woman or child. We have in hand a robust security education programme for service personnel and their families, underlining the need to be vigilant to the terrorist threat at all times. However, it is equally important that the civilian community should be alert and watchful. No one can be truly safe while those vicious men and women are at large.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: Will the Minister assure the House that no families of Army, Navy or Air Force personnel live outside the perimeter walls of barracks without security cover?

Mr. Hamilton: That depends on what the hon. Gentleman means by "security cover". A number of people live outside the perimeter fences and we take security precautions for them in conjunction with the local police. I am not saying that they do not get any protection, but neither am I saying that they get very much.

Mr. Cryer: May I share the Minister's condemnation of the Provisional IRA and its unscrupulous and immoral acts of slaughter of innocent members of the public and innocent members of the armed forces? However, will he differentiate his moral condemnation of the IRA from his moral support for the retention and deployment of nuclear weapons, which involve the potential mass slaughter of millions of innocent men and women on the decision of a tiny handful of people? That seems at odds with his claims of morality.

Mr. Hamilton: I have never understood the hon. Gentleman's views on morality on this matter. A conventional war was fought in Europe between 1939 and 1945, in which millions of people died. There were no nuclear weapons there whatever. There is nothing particularly safe about conventional war and there should be no suggestion that in fighting a conventional war a minimal number of people will die. People die in their millions in conventional war. We are in the business of preventing war, and I believe that the nuclear deterrent in Europe has played a major role in ensuring that there has not been a third world war on European soil; and, as a result, millions of lives have been saved. I find that an extremely moral standpoint.

During 1989, 184 awards for gallantry or meritorious conduct were received by service personnel, including 29 awards for the UDR. Those awards are but one means of

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illustrating the debt that we all owe to the bravery and devotion to duty of those who serve in the armed forces in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Before my hon. Friend leaves the subject of the IRA and Northern Ireland, will he reflect on the fact that Parliament recently voted to give an additional £40 per week to all those service widows whose husbands died before 1973? However, as a result of a quirk, widows whose husbands were killed in Northern Ireland between 1969 and 1973 have had their ex gratia payments taken from them. Therefore, instead of receiving the full £40 each that Parliament intended, they are receiving considerably less. One of my constituents, whose husband was killed by the IRA in Northern Ireland, is only £12 per week better off. Will my hon. Friend please look into that matter because I am sure that what has happened was not the intention of the House or the Government?

Mr. Hamilton: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention. I was aware of people's difficulties, relating to the pre-1973 rule. What has happened was not what we were trying to achieve and I shall certainly look into the matter for my hon. Friend and write to him.

Last year, the armed services maintained a constantly high level of operations in support of the RUC, achieving notable successes against the merchants of death. During 1989, 327 weapons, 37,700 rounds of ammunition and 7·5 tonnes of explosives were seized by the security forces. Over the same period, 196 bombs were made safe and so far this year 61 bombs have been neutralised—an amazing testimony to the mettle and skill of the bomb disposal teams. Regrettably, it is clear that the IRA is still determined to carry out its campaigns of violence and intimidation, but there can be no doubt that the security forces' achievements that I have just mentioned allow the vast majority of the citizens of Northern Ireland to go about their normal business and have saved the lives of many civilians and service men who would otherwise have been added to the number already viciously murdered by the terrorists.

The terrorists continue to bring imprisonment and death down upon themselves. Last year, 233 people were charged, in Northern Ireland, with serious terrorist-type offences, of which 31 were for murder and 48 for attempted murder. In addition, two terrorists paid with their lives for their murderous activities, and one has done so up to this point in 1990.

For over 20 years now, those murderers have brought only death and destruction to Northern Ireland and that is all they bring. Hope for a peaceful future is not in their inventory, because they have nothing. They recognise that they have failed at the crucial instrument of democracy, the ballot box, and misguidedly pretend to believe that they can take power through murder, and maiming instead. We will not let that happen. We are determined to eliminate the awful threat that hangs over all the decent people of Northern Ireland.

As long as it is needed, the Army—this includes the UDR as an integral and major element—will continue to play its part in that vital task of maintaining the rule of law. Everyone in the House is keen to see the soldiers off the streets; it is only the terrorists who keep them there.

Mr. Winnick: Does the Minister agree that it is a fact that Provisional Sinn Fein has remained a minority within a minority, achieving too high a vote as far as I am concerned, but still remaining a minority within the Catholic and Nationalist community in Northern Ireland? As the Provisional IRA claims, however, to carry out what it is doing on behalf of the Irish people as such, is not it appropriate that when I met Mr. Adams and others in September 1983 as part of a parliamentary Labour party Northern Ireland delegation and asked him about where the Provisional IRA's mandate was to carry out its slaughter, he said that there was a mandate, but since then, Provisional Sinn Fein has contested two elections in the Irish Republic and on both occasions has received less than 2 per cent. of the vote? What sort of a mandate from the Irish people can the IRA claim to have?

Mr. Hamilton: That has always amazed and considerably worried me. The IRA has no effect through the ordinary democratic process and feels that the bomb is the only thing left to it. That concerns me. The IRA has no support in any measurable quantity from the people either north or south of the border, which makes its actions even more reprehensible.

In conclusion, the changing international situation gives us the opportunity to maintain our security and sustain our responsibilities with lower force levels, and that means at lower cost, too.

We are sensibly considering the possible options for change in defence taking into account changes in east-west relations, the question of resources and the future size and shape of the armed forces required to meet the future defence of our country. While we are doing that we must ask, "What is Labour doing?"

A fortnight ago, Labour published another policy document, somewhat grandiosely entitled "Looking to the Future"—and what a murky future it foretold. After all the leaks, we had been led to expect a policy document. Instead we found 20,000 words of evasion and generalisation, which was of more interest for what was omitted than what was included. But we know the reason —do we not?

Last year Labour attempted to persuade the country that it had had a change of heart over our nuclear deterrent. It decided that unilateralism was clearly an electoral liability and Labour wanted to persuade the British people that it had dropped it. So what does Labour offer now? Instead of giving Britain's nuclear weapons away on day one, it will now negotiate them away on day two. The means have changed but the result is the same in the end. Britain will have no nuclear weapons and the Soviets will be left with thousands.

I was somewhat surprised to hear the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) saying recently that, now that he no longer has a party to lead, he might return to the Labour party, as its policies have improved so much. I am sorry that the right hon. Gentleman is not in his place—he often attends defence debates. However, I thought that the former leader of the SDP placed great importance on Britain having its own independent nuclear deterrent, and Labour is not offering that.

So I say to the right hon. Gentleman in his absence that there is no point in looking for sensible Conservative policies of market economics and strong defence in the

Labour party. Come to the party that really believes in those things. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster will sign him up tomorrow.

5.59 pm

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): I begin by apologising for the absence of my hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. Hughes). In last year's debate, mention was made of his illness and we hoped that he would be well enough to open the debate today. Unfortunately, that is not possible, but I understand that his recovery is continuing and we hope that he will return soon. I know that both Opposition and Conservative Members wish to convey their sincere wishes for a complete recovery.

As the Minister said, during the past year the Army has carried out its often difficult tasks in an exemplary manner. Labour Members join the Minister in paying a full tribute to our service people for their dedication to their chosen profession. With the Minister, I congratulate those who have received awards in the past year.

The past year has seen some extraordinary attacks of extreme cowardice on unarmed and unprepared service people and their families, often in their leisure time or on their holidays. Recently, innocent civilians were murdered in a so-called accident in the so-called glorious struggle. We join everyone in the House in condemnation of that and other attacks.

Since last September alone, outside of Northern Ireland, there have been 13 deaths in this country and 13 people have been injured. As the Minister said, seven people have been killed and five injured in Europe. The killings included the grotesque murder of a six-month-old baby. That can never be condoned, and no political aim can justify it.

To lose one's life on duty in an armed confrontation is unfortunately a hazard that is part of a soldier's life, but, outside of that, the completely unacceptable and cowardly way in which terrorists acts are committed add nothing to —indeed, they subtract from—the honour of the cause and of the country involved. In condemning those cowardly acts, we applaud the current talks between the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the parties involved. I do not know whether there is any light at the end of that tunnel, but I hope that the talks succeed and that the unwanted division of the most kindly island of Ireland will soon cease.

I congratulate the service people in Northern Ireland who have to submit to the conditions there. In particular, I congratulate the brave members of the bomb disposal unit on the magnificent job that they do and also those in the civilian sector such as ambulancemen, policemen, doctors, nurses and firemen who participate in fighting the horrific problems that arise from the activities of terrorists.

I am glad that the Minister spent some time dealing with security and referred to the report of the Select Committee on Defence on the physical security of military installations. I keep wondering why the Select Committee has to carry out such investigations and highlight certain issues. Why does the Select Committee continually have to point out to the Minister problems which the Government know exist? Only when the scandal of the Committee's reports breaks do the Government decide to do something.

We welcome the changes made and the fact that the Minister spent £126 million last year on enhancing security. But it is too little and too late. I congratulate all members of the Defence Select Committee on highlighting the alarming state of security and publishing such a powerful report.

Mr. Brazier: All hon. Members share equal anxiety on this matter and fully accept the hon. Gentleman's sincere comments about the hideous outrages that have occurred. However, this is not principally an issue of resourcing. The best way to prevent terrorist outrages is to identify, catch and convict through the courts the villains who perpetrate them. It is sad that we have seen no movement by the Labour Front Bench towards joining not only the Conservative Government but most other parties in the House in supporting the measures in the Prevention of Terrorism Act 1989. While the measures are certainly not fully effective, at least they provide some of the additional powers needed to identify the villains.

Mr. Rogers: If I had thought that the hon. Gentleman would make that silly point all over again, I would not have given way. It is a silly point. It shows that he does not understand what the issue is all about. The reason why we vote against the Act and why we want it to be reviewed every year is that the measures contained in it are fundamentally against civil liberties.

Mr. Brazier *rose*——

Mr. Rogers: The hon. Gentleman must listen. He posed a question. We accept——

Mr. Michael Mates (Hampshire, East): Murder is against civil liberties.

Mr. Rogers: Of course murder is against civil liberties. We say that in the hands of the wrong Government, the measures in the Prevention of Terrorism Act could lead us down the wrong alleyway. The reason why we emphasise that, vote against the Act and want it reviewed every year is that we hope that it will be a temporary measure and not a permanent part of the way of life of this country.

The hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) and the Ministers especially should not scoff. The record of all Governments has not been good on implementing some of the measures in the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Only recently, the courts had to free people who had spent 14 years in gaol after, as it was thought, being brought to book under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. For all the time that the Prevention of Terrorism Act has been in force, it has not prevented terrorism. That is probably the greatest indictment of it.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman must clarify the Labour party's position. Would it not review the Prevention of Terrorism Act if it came to power?

Mr. Rogers: We shall review all legislation that is extant operated by the present Government. What amazes me about Army and services debate is that, whenever constructive criticism is made, Conservative Members, especially those who spent a couple of years in the Army, wrap themselves in the union jack and say, "What marvellous people we are," and so on. Let us come on to specific resources for physical security and the report of the Defence Committee chaired by the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates). Let us discuss some of the issues and the penny-pinching of the Government, which has caused the deaths of many people.

Mr. Conway: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Rogers: I shall not give way now. I wish to make this point.

One issue highlighted by the Select Committee report was the employment of private security firms. The practice of using such firms has increased under this Government. The Defence Select Committee and the Ministry of Defence police in its submission said that the practice was increasing because the Government were attempting to save money. When 11 Marines were killed in Deal, the firm in charge of security at that barracks was Reliance Security Services. It employed people who had criminal records and people who were badly trained and who were paid about £2 an hour.

That is the Government's real service to the security of our armed forces. Conservative Members may scoff about the Labour party's attitude to security, but they would do better to support the Select Committee's attack on their Government for the lapse of security and the lack of money provided.

Dr. Godman: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Rogers: No, I shall not give way for the moment.

The employment of private security companies is simply an extension of the Government's ideological obsession of private is good and public is bad. The desire to save money has led to bad security arrangements in many establishments and perhaps resulted in needless deaths.

We firmly believe that private contracted security companies are not suitable for guarding Ministry of Defence establishments. We believe that private security firm employees lack adequate vetting, initial training, probationary periods and inter-organisation communication and information. The incidence of lax vetting was emphasised last year when it was revealed that a criminal with 500 convictions and a prison record for burglary, arson and violence was employed by the Reliance Security Services—the company employed at the Royal Marines barracks at Deal. I note that Ministers find this funny: obviously they are amused that service men have been killed when off duty and at leisure——

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Oh, come off it.

Mr. Rogers: I am not sure what Ministers are doing. One moment they are scoffing and complaining about the Labour party, but when I raise the issue of security all they can do is grin among themselves. We do not want the stress on financial savings to lead to false economies, thus creating a high turnover of private firms, a high failure rate and inadequate service.

Mr. Mates: Our report was carefully worded and it is critical in parts about certain situations the Select Committee found, but nowhere have we said that lives have been put at risk by that. In particular, no reference is made to the incident at Deal, simply because at the time our report went to press we had no report on it. We are awaiting that report and it is important to put that on record.

Mr. Rogers: I accept what the Chairman of the Select Committee has said, but from the evidence submitted it is clear that the company in charge of security at Deal was incompetent and should not have been employed. That evidence was known to the MOD police, and if that information was available to the Government why did they not act on it? It is worth quoting to the Chairman of the Select Committee what he said in his report about vandalism committed by security guards. He said that it was not an isolated occurence:

"that the MOD should not be able instantly to remove the security guards for lack of a viable alternative beggars belief."

I do not believe that there has ever been a more savage criticism of a Government, certainly not since I have been here.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I do not want to prejudge the report on Deal, but, given what the hon. Gentleman has said, it is important to establish that the private security firm employed at Deal was involved in checking people's cars and those people coming in and out through the entrance to the garrison. In addition, it undertook a number of daytime patrols, but it was not asked to undertake patrols at night. It seems highly likely that the bomb was put in place at night when the garrison was not the responsibility of the private security firm.

Mr. Rogers: I am grateful to the Minister, but I much prefer to leave the savage criticism of the Defence Committee to the House and let it judge the Government's stand.

The Minister began his speech at 5.6 pm and it was a long time before he sat down.

Mr. Conway: He gave way.

Mr. Rogers: In fairness to the Minister, he gave way a remarkable number of times. However, his historical analysis of changes in eastern Europe was claptrap. He stole the clothes of the people. He had not one word of credit for those who went out on the streets in eastern Europe and fought against the dictatorships that they had suffered for so many years. He said that the changes were all due to the Government. He had no word of credit for Mr. Gorbachev. At least Mr. Bush and Mr. Shultz had the decency to give Russia and Mr. Gorbachev credit for what has happened in eastern Europe—something the Minister did not have the decency to do.

The past year has witnessed profound changes politically and militarily in eastern Europe. Some of the arguments in last year's debate on the Army now convey a sense of unreality because of those great changes. The whole basis of strategic thinking and tactical consideration has altered. We are entering a new era which demands new thinking. We need to question fundamentally the role of our armed forces in that changed world. I was surprised that the Minister appeared to say that there would be no change. His remarks about our Army in West Germany and our role in NATO suggest that the Government are not looking to change the role of our armed forces.

We welcome the encouraging progress in the strategic arms reduction talks and the conventional forces in Europe talks. We fully support the call made by President Bush on 8 May to review the conventional and nuclear strategies. We believe that the alliance should take this opportunity finally to jettison the outmoded strategies of flexible response and forward defence. We also applaud the President's decision to cancel the Lance replacement and the modernisation of nuclear shells, especially given the alarming state of some of them.

There is no point repeating the political changes that have taken place about which we are all aware. There is hardly any need to repeat the effect of those changes on

military needs and responses. However, it is worth asking the Government what they propose to do in response to those changes.

The Minister completely missed the point made by his hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway). We now face the sorry sight of the Secretary of State for Defence and the Minister of State for Defence Procurement disagreeing about what to do. We are most interested to learn where the Minister of State for the Armed Forces stands in this quarrel. I presume that he is coming down on the side of the Secretary of State. He is a clever boy, but, in common with his colleague the Minister of State for Defence Procurement, he has probably had to repeat that he, too, is an old friend of the Secretary of State. I must warn the Secretary of State, however, that the Minister of State for the Armed Forces had just finished a stint as Parliamentary Private Secretary to the headmistress, and he probably still has a key to her room.

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement is said to have written a paper that recommended a detailed number of cuts. He suggested a reduction in the number of infantry battalions from 55 to 32—a suggestion to which the hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham sought to draw attention—an expansion of the Royal Marines and the Parachute Regiment, and the abandonment of the anti-tank TRIGAT system and the multiple-launch rocket system. Because of that back-door missive, the Secretary of State is supposed to be in a dangerously exposed position. I am sure that he is very uncomfortable, but I am equally sure that his position is unassailable at the moment.

It is clear that there is considerable disagreement within the MOD as well as in Cabinet about how to react to the changing international situation. On the one hand, the Secretary of State argues that we should wait and see. That argument has been advanced in the foreword to the defence estimates—a purely reactive position. On the other hand, the Minister of State for Defence Procurement is advocating a policy of cuts that appears to take no account of the new strategic realities or the need to draw up coherent and sensible plans. He appears to be going for a quick peace profit, no doubt to satisfy the Treasury's demand to fund the poll tax in the coming year.

The Secretary of State is, of course, a much wiser and older man——

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): He just looks older.

Mr. Rogers: Yes, indeed. The right hon. Gentleman realises that there are substantial costs in many of the changes, particularly in manpower. He also realises that there is no quick peace profit for the poll tax.

The proposals of the Minister of State are of great concern, first because of his good connections with the Prime Minister and secondly because of the content of those proposals. His argument that we must adjust our defence posture to the more likely future conflicts in the third world and the far east seem to indicate that we desire to play a more positive role in those areas. That is an issue of great concern, considering our recent history of colonial involvements and the enormous cost in lives and money of those involvements and withdrawal from them.

It is obvious that, over the coming decade, British military forces in Germany will be cut to dramatically lower levels, significantly further than the 10 to 15 per cent. reduction envisaged under the CFE treaty, seemingly the basis on which the Minister makes his proposals.

Those cuts will take place not only because of military rationalisation but because of political reality. A new united Germany will almost surely want to be rid of what will increasingly be seen as foreign troops on its soil. It seems ludicrous for the Minister to talk about East Germany not wanting Russian troops on its soil, without even considering that it will be part of a united Germany and that one can presume that, if Russian troops will be asked to get out of the eastern sector of the country, at some stage the West Germans will ask us to withdraw, or substantially lower, our presence there.

According to the argument of the Minister of State for Defence Procurement, bringing our forces back to the United Kingdom will be a real option. But it will not be a cheap option. It will be expensive not just in transport costs but in relocation costs, even if barrack facilities, stores and workshops were available. To disband regiments quickly, as has been suggested, would also be an immediately expensive option, with substantial morale and social implications.

We welcome the opportunity that the reductions will provide to cut defence expenditure, but the changes must come about through a process of internationally negotiated and verified disarmament agreements, not by a Minister of State trying to get one over on the Secretary of State and looking for a peace profit to fund the poll tax. It is evident that, as force size is reduced, national forces will no longer be capable of fulfilling all their current roles and that unit costs will increase as the advantages derived from economies of scale are lost. So the Government—I was glad to hear the Minister's remarks on this issue—must commence discussions with our NATO partners on the development of multinational units. On an open basis, Ministers should embark on a full-scale defence review, instead of wasting their energies fighting among themselves over their secretive options for change.

The present size and shape of the British Army is determined largely by the existence of BAOR. If there are to be reductions, impending procurement decisions must be altered too, for they are related not only to the size of the Army but to the perceived risk on what has hitherto been regarded as the central front.

At a recent Defence Question Time, the Minister of State for Defence Procurement disagreed with the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) and said that the next battlefield would not necessarily be found in central Europe. The Minister of State has a penchant for making peculiar statements, but it is difficult to imagine circumstances in which British or NATO forces could become involved in the unstable areas of eastern Europe —especially, say, in Romania, Yugoslavia and the Baltic —even as classical peace keeping forces.

The proposition that units brought home from Germany could form a new, highly flexible force, as outlined by the Minister today, poses as many questions as it answers, particularly in considering where they would be used. Even if they were to adopt such a new role, the equipment and weapons that they would require would be different from those now used in a central front tank-based role. The proposition of having an air-mobile, flexible, quick response force, for example, would demand an immediate decision on helicopter procurement, a decision which the Government seem reluctant to make.

[Mr. Rogers]

The Opposition see the development of a lean, flexible, highly mobile defence force as a valid option for the future. Such a force would be superstructured on a substantial, properly equipped and highly trained reserve Army. It would be available, for example, for United Nations peace keeping duties and to assist in relieving natural disasters wherever they occur. It would always be available to defend our freedoms, democracies and traditions.

All that will not represent a quick fix, and almost certainly it will not be a cheaper option creating immediate huge savings. Savings will come, but not until after reorganisation. The new Army will come about only if some serious issues are addressed now by the Government, the problem of recruitment and retention being the most important, depending in turn on pay and conditions, restoring flagging morale, integrating ethnic minorities and re-identifying the role of women in the services.

The defence estimates again show a net outflow of personnel, with recruitment at 21,348 and an outflow of 24,056, a net loss of 2,608 in the last year. It is rightly said that those personnel represent a valuable investment in training and skills, and that we can ill afford to lose them.

The number of people applying for and taking premature voluntary release is rising again. Each year the Government say that they will introduce new measures, will carry out more surveys and will commission more reports. But still the PVR figures are rising. We appreciate that the problem is difficult, but it is not intractable. Given some of the difficulties that are causing premature voluntary release, the Government are compounding, rather than relieving, the problem, and the so-called wide measures which seek to improve the rate of retention are obviously not working.

I cite the example of service accommodation, about which hon. Members in all parts of the House are concerned. According to the Secretary of State, increased funds will be made available for refurbishing service accommodation. The provision of good-quality service accommodation has always been difficult. For that reason, in 1978 the then Labour Government froze the level of accommodation charges, partly out of concern about the quality of accommodation. That concern still exists.

The report in 1988 of the Armed Forces Pay Review Body spoke of how the

"accommodation, particularly the single accommodation, is of poor quality, badly maintained, or both."

That body's latest report noted:

"Too many personnel will continue to occupy accommodation classed as Grade 4, well below the standard which would be regarded as acceptable in civilian life."

The Government acknowledge in the defence estimates that attention

"is being given to the problems that Service personnel face over housing."

Opposition Members have frequently expressed concern about the dreadful quality of some service accommodation. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) noted on a visit to Catterick camp that the condition of the houses was horrific. We know that, on 1 April 1989, the backlog of unavoidable repairs to married quarters was costed at £323 million. Perhaps the Minister can tell us about the current backlog of housing repairs. It is fairly obvious that the Government are just about the worst landlords in Great Britain. If any of our local authorities that the Government love to bash managed their estates in the same way as the Ministry of Defence, the Government would soon push them into court.

Another important issue affecting morale is the ethnic composition of our armed forces, which still does not reflect the ethnic composition of our population. It is a complex problem and will continue to exist as long as the numbers coming into the forces are low. It is only as the numbers increase that the racism that exists in the services will decline.

The Peat Marwick McLintock report to which I referred in the Royal Air Force debate on 28 February said that the poor image of the services on racial issues was the single most important reason for low application rates. I hope that the Government will do more about that. Perhaps the Minister will say whether additional training for recruitment officers will be introduced. Will recruitment advertising be reorganised to present a more positive image of ethnic minorities? Above all, what steps do the Government propose to tackle racism in the services?

Another act of the Government which results in the loss of service personnel is the imposition of the poll tax on members of the armed forces. We have received a tremendous number of complaints. It is another example of the grotesque unfairness of the poll tax. A private soldier on about £7,600 a year will pay the same poll tax as a general on £72,000 a year. Service personnel on the same pay will pay widely differing rates of poll tax depending on where their barracks or married quarters are located. The quartering charges that were payable before 1 April have in many cases gone up more than tenfold. Service personnel in multi-room accommodation will pay the same as officers in single-room accommodation.

No one can tell me that the imposition of the poll tax on the members of our services is fair. Conservative Members have condemned the imposition of this charge on, for example, the Gurkhas. The hon. Member for Hampshire, East pointed to that grossly unfair demand on troops stationed in this country. That unfairness is compounded by the fact that foreign troops do not have to pay, but troops in the British service, even though they do not use many local authority facilities, have to pay the poll tax.

One of the most disturbing events in the past year, certainly for me and for other hon. Members who have a respect for our serving soldiers and who served in the Army, was the publication of the book "The New Model Army" by Michael Yardley and Dennis Sewell, who are former cavalry officers. Their claim of

"undeniable symptoms of moral decay"

in a system that rewards "ruthless careerism", and tolerates bullying in an organisation that contains

"the worst racial bigots in Society"

is extremely disturbing. *[Interruption.]*

Those criticisms are voiced by two former cavalry officers and not by the National Council for Civil Liberties or by someone from the Labour party. The criticisms come from two of the Army's own. I know that Conservative Members will feel vindictive towards those two officers, who have probably voted Tory all their lives, but they should at least listen to what those men have to say. I am not saying that their views are shared by me or any of my hon. Friends.

The two ex-cavalry officers say more philosophically

that the Army is

"divorced from the body of the nation . . . tolerated by the rest of the community either because we do not know what is going on or do not want to know."

Those are matters for debate, but they also accuse the Army of being a professionally competent but often brutalised elite which deliberately keeps aloof from the society it serves, and that is a matter of great concern. I am not quite sure about the motives of the two ex-officers in writing the book, but Conservative Members will applaud me when I say that I do not go along with their prescription for what they call a new model army.

The two ex-officers have come up with the idea of voluntary national service

"to keep youngsters off the dole queue"

in order to relate the Army more to the community that it serves. That would be accompanied by a home defence force, the members of which would keep their weapons and ammunition at home. That is said to be

"not dissimilar to the rifle volunteers of the late Victorian era."

I know that that will strike a chord with the Prime Minister, but it fills me and my hon. Friends with great alarm.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): The hon. Gentleman earlier praised the Army for its proficiency, and he included other ingredients that made it what he thought was a thoroughly commendable institution. Does he agree with the criticisms that he has just read to the

Mr. Rogers: My experience of the Army goes back some 30 years, so I have to admit that perhaps in this context I am out of touch with the Army as it exists now. As I have said, these were comments not by the NCCL but by ex-cavalry officers. I understand that the hon. Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) served as a captain in the Army. He is aware of the structure of the Army and the elitism that exists within it. I should have thought that some of the criticisms are justified. Without saying whether I agree with them, I have to say that I am worried that they have been made. I am also concerned about the wall of silence surrounding the book. The Government have made no comment on it since it was published in September, and that is a little disturbing.

Many procurement issues are linked to the inevitable decline in the number of people in our Regular Army. One of the most important decisions will be that about the Challenger 2 tank. Its procurement will have to be critically examined, because it will reach its third milestone test in September, which is just 12 weeks away. The examination should be most urgent. I hope that the Government are aware of the severe economic and industrial consequences on the areas concerned that will flow from their decision. I hope that they will firmly consider the Challenger 2 over and above tanks from any other country.

Another procurement decision that causes concern relates to the third-generation anti-tank guided weapons system, the TRIGAT family. Perhaps the Minister will tell us what is to happen about that. It seems that the future of the programme is in doubt, first on the ground that it may not have the ability or the capacity to penetrate some of the new types of armour that have been developed, and secondly, I understand, on the ground that the premise of great tank battles is no longer valid. There is no up-to-date information about how the project is faring in meeting its milestones, or even what targets have been set. Perhaps the Minister can tell us something about that.

Another uncertainty in procurement is the future requirement for military helicopters, including those for the Army. Originally, the need for greater air mobility was seen as a response to a specific Warsaw pact threat in central Europe and there was a widespread perception that this would require more and better helicopters for the Army. This threat has disappeared, but the case for air mobility and more helicopters is being presented as a response to the new situation—the development of a flexible, mobile Army. Perhaps the Minister can give us an idea of what the Government intend to do about helicopter equipment for all the forces.

As I said at the outset, change has been thrust upon us by the momentous events in eastern Europe. Change can take place in different ways—in a purely reactive manner, waiting for events to pressure the changes, à la the Secretary of State, or in a simplistic way, by drawing up a list, à la the Minister of State for Defence Procurement. It can also take place in a reasonable, structured and orderly fashion, attempting to maintain morale, to retain manpower, and to ease job and company losses in critical procurement sectors. The Opposition would choose that latter option. The sooner the Government get out and let us take the decisions on the country's defence, the better.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that the 10-minute limit on speeches will operate from 7 o'clock.

6.42 pm

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): The hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) made a number of interesting points, some of which we can only profoundly disagree with. I am tempted to follow him down some of the paths that he has trodden so delicately, but I fear that I should outstay my welcome if I did, because I know that many hon. Members on both sides of the House wish to speak. I have a number of points that I wish to make on my own account. However, I was glad to hear that the hon. Gentleman does not expect any quick fix to the problems of defence or any quick peace dividend. I hope that that message will go as loud and clear from the Opposition Benches as it has from the Government Benches. It is important that the public understand this.

We all know that my right hon. and hon. Friends with responsibility for defence have a most difficult task. They have to determine how far it would be wise to reduce expenditure on defence or to reduce the size of the armed forces in a period of uncertainty and instability, as my hon. Friend the Minister called it. They must be seen to respond to the promising developments in eastern Europe, while still protecting the essential fabric and integrity of the armed forces. They must be aware that prudence will no doubt be denounced by people impatient for what they call a peace dividend. That is why I am so pleased that the hon. Member for Rhondda spoke as he did. They will be challenged by others to justify the continued existence of the NATO alliance. However, I am confident that, in laying their plans for the future, the Government—I hope that the Opposition will go along with them on this—will recognise that, at this time and for the foreseeable future,

[Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith]

to call for the demise of NATO would be short-sighted, unrealistic and ultimately damaging to the long-term cause of peace and stability.

If hon. Members think that that is going too far, let me remind them of the recent debate in plenary session of the North Atlantic Assembly, when delegates from 16 countries discussed the future of the alliance. There was overwhelming support—which embraced all sections of major political parties in western Europe—for a resolution stating that membership of a united Germany in NATO was essential for security in Europe. The German delegation agreed that Germany could not be neutral. It was led by one of Germany's senior spokesmen on defence matters, from the SDP.

Secondly, the resolution asserted that the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe has an indispensable role to play in Europe which should not be thought of as a substitute for the alliance, which remains essential to western security. Thirdly, the resolution advocated an enhanced political role in NATO in view of the decline of the military threat. We warmly support that. Fourthly, it called for the creation of a true European pillar within the alliance. Fifthly, it urged the assembly to establish ties with eastern European Parliaments and to contribute to the building of democracy. It also agreed on the necessity to have a north American presence. That is a substantial agenda for an organisation that has helped to preserve the peace of the world.

Mr. Tony Banks: The North Atlantic Assembly is bound to pass such a resolution. The desire for a united Germany in NATO might have been expressed by the representatives of the Federal Republic at the Assembly, but, according to the latest opinion polls in both East and West Germany, that is not the opinion of the German people, who would like a demilitarised zone around their country, with the withdrawal of both Soviet and American troops.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: I am sorry to have to tell the hon. Gentleman that he misunderstands the purpose of the North Atlantic Assembly. It is not composed of paid officials or of people who subscribe to the views of NATO. It is composed freely of representatives of the Parliaments who come there and debate solidly. All kinds of criticisms fly around, but it would be unwise of the hon. Gentleman to dismiss with contumely what I have said. The Government of the Federal Republic strongly believe in a united Germany and that that united Germany should be part of NATO. I regard the views expressed by Chancellor Kohl as carrying far more weight than the public opinion polls mentioned by the hon. Gentleman. The German people are the very people who supported his idea for unity, knowing very well for what it is that he is asking.

We all know that there is room for manoeuvre and debate—we have all heard my hon. Friend the Minister—in respect of East Germany and what, when it becomes part of a united Germany, should be the position of the troops of the Warsaw pact, of the Soviet Union and NATO. That is a strong view. Even if the hon. Gentleman does not agree with me, he should agree that a wide number of issues demand the continued presence of NATO. The hon. Gentleman should welcome rather than deplore the agenda that I set out.

We should not forget that one of the great benefits of NATO is that it is the only defence organisation in the world that has the integrated military structure, the resources and plans to enable it to take the prompt action necessary to protect the security of the nations that belong to it and, if necessary, the security of Europe as a whole. To dismantle it at this time in our history would undo all the progress that we have made in the past 40 years. Therefore, I hope that we shall hear little from Opposition Members, and certainly not from those on the Front Bench—I am glad to have the nodding head of agreement from the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes)—about dismantling NATO in the foreseeable future. At least there is one voice of agreement there, and we shall hear from the hon. Gentleman when he winds up for the Opposition.

I recognise that NATO will have to change as events develop. No one should say that it should be frozen as events were frozen during the cold war. If, as seems inevitable, nations move to smaller forces, this should increase the incentive to produce a more rational defence effort through such innovations as role specialisation. I understand that it is ludicrously expensive for nations to cover the gamut of their defence needs. They have to co-operate more closely with other nations. Therefore, in their options for change, I hope that the Government will develop their own ideas for a more effective distribution of roles and missions within the alliance.

My hon. Friend the Minister has already spoken about the formation of multinational units, and I am glad that he took such a positive approach to this. As he knows, NATO's integrated command structure is integrated not only at headquarters level but down to Army level. The creation of a multinational corps comprising several national divisions would, in my view, be practical. As is recognised by most people on both sides of the argument—it was certainly recognised by the hon. Member for Rhondda—too many reductions would mean a not very practicable force. The United Kingdom-Netherlands amphibious force provides us with a good model on which to base any further expansion.

When restructuring our forces, we should above all avoid making short-term salami cuts for the sake of economy. That would pose a danger that has caused chronic problems in most other countries that have faced the same difficulties. Such economies usually prove expensive in the long run: they demoralise the armed forces, and leave them thoroughly ill balanced and incapable of fulfilling any military role. The result is a shambles.

The Army has had to face some pretty drastic changes in the past. In 1957, when conscription ended, it became an all-volunteer force, relying on the Territorial Army for further expansion. It weathered the storm, but the 1960s and 1970s brought both amalgamations and disbandments. When the previous Secretary of State for Defence, my right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger), was a Back Bencher, he and I would carry into the House ballot box after ballot box loaded with requests for us to save the Argylls. Thank goodness we had the sense to do so. We do not want to go through that again if we can help it.

During the past 33 years—since the end of conscription—our all-volunteer Army has served us well. It has, on the whole, been well equipped and exceedingly well led, and its soldiers have attained the highest professional standards.

A criticism by two officers was mentioned by the hon. Member for Rhondda; I do not know how an army with such a background could achieve the reputation that our Army has achieved, not only in this country but worldwide. The nation has every right to be proud of its bearing, and greatful for what it has done. We simply cannot afford to destroy the best of what we have built. Events may require a smaller Army, but it must nevertheless be capable of sustaining its skills.

Let me seek two specific assurances from the Government. The first concerns the best use of a demographically shrinking and increasingly valuable commodity—manpower and womanpower. The second concerns the need to prevent short-term financial measures from causing irreparable damage to defence research and development. Such programmes increasingly underpin the fighting capabilities of our armed forces. Their morale must not be harmed; they should have well-defined roles, and be capable of rapid expansion from a firm and stable base should conditions for preserving the peace deteriorate.

If all that is to be done, as economically as possible, our smaller Regular Army will depend more than ever on a rapid reinforcement capability, provided by a well trained and well equipped Territorial Army. I hope that the Ministers have considered the concept of integrating regular and TA units. They may also have considered providing more support units for the Regular Army from the TA. Such measures may help us to avoid having to disband overstretched regiments, with all the attendant pain, anguish and damage to Army traditions that we experienced in the 1960s and 1970s.

We must, of course, look to the Government to provide the necessary financial incentives for the TA and the reserve forces, but I believe that a trade-off will be possible. There will be a greater proportion of troops in the front-line combat formations in a smaller Regular Army, ready at short notice to carry out peacekeeping roles and to cope with emergencies before they escalate. A reduction in the Army's presence in Europe could lead to a recognition that we can play a stabilising and peacekeeping role in some areas outside Europe, along with our European allies. Unlike other hon. Members, I am thinking less of eastern Europe than of places perhaps more significant to our national interests: I have in mind the threats posed from the Gulf, the middle east and north Africa. Thinking along such lines could lead to important changes in the equipment and roles of our armed forces.

As I have said, my second point concerns research and development. The days when British forces kept the peace, or skirmished with lightly armed but intrepid fuzzy-wuzzies, are, of course, long past. Not so long ago—between the two world wars—we allowed not only the manpower of our army, but the quality and modernity of its equipment, to decline. The dismal result has been that, too often in our history, our men have had to fight using the weapons, tactics and ideas of a previous war.

Today—leaving aside the strength and quality of the Soviet armed forces, which will clearly remain prodigious for some time—quite minor powers are extremely well equipped, possessing superior, sophisticated conventional electronic equipment, chemical warfare weapons and ballistic missiles. In the not too distant future, we shall witness the application of artificial intelligence systems on the battlefield.

No doubt the Treasury has already fixed its jaundiced eye on the £450 million spent on research by the Ministry of Defence. We should accept that modern armies may not always have the gold-plated equipment that they so often desire, but R and D is the seedcorn: if I may change my metaphor, it cannot be switched on and off. Its future demands the most careful planning, not only for our Army's sake but for the sake of our defence-based industries. I hope that I shall not be accused of taking advantage of my connection with MEL, a defence subsidiary of Philips.

In today's more technical world, a smaller army will depend more than ever on the right scientific and technical back-up and will require its skills to be tested continually by the fruits of research. If Ministers must deny the Army the production orders that it seeks, I ask them to stand firm on the need for development—at least up to prototype stage—and for the technical demonstration tests that can do so much to decide whether a piece of equipment should be ordered.

If the Government adopt such measures, should technical innovation threaten the balance and efficiency of our forces or a new threat loom on the horizon, we shall be able to retain in the United Kingdom—or in conjunction with our NATO allies—a sound base on which to expand and meet the new conditions. I wish my right hon. Friends every success in their endeavour.

6.57 pm

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): In the past year, single-service debates have given us the opportunity to consider some rather wider issues—as was eloquently demonstrated in the tour d'horizon with which the Minister favoured the House. The theme of his remarks was change, and the need for its acceptance—a prospect that perhaps bears more accurately on the Army than on the other two services.

The changes in Europe will undoubtedly result in a reduction in the British Army of the Rhine; undoubtedly, the purpose for much of our Army procurement and deployment will be overtaken by the substantial political and, subsequently, military changes that have occurred in Europe, especially in the past 12 months. If we are to have more mobile and flexible forces—forces that are leaner and meaner—the great debate about tanks versus helicopters will have to reach some conclusion.

Perhaps that conclusion will be provoked by the arrival of September, when we shall reach an important staging post in the determination of which tank is to be favoured. Perhaps, however, a more fundamental and radical question should be whether we should consider replacing the tank at all. That is one of the important issues that are undoubtedly being considered in connection with the options for change, to which I shall return shortly.

The much publicised desire of the Chief Secretary to the Treasury to get £1 billion out of the defence budget is the wrong way to approach the changing landscape presented by defence issues. Would not the proper way be to assess the nature of the threat, determine the means necessary to meet it and then to budget to provide those means? Whether it is the Chief Secretary trying to get £1 billion off the defence budget or the annual conference of the Labour party voting to take £5 billion off it, each is as flawed as the other.

[Mr. Menzies Campbell]

Approaching the issue from a budgetary viewpoint may result in precisely the sort of defects to which the hon. Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) eloquently referred. It was notable that the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) placed great stress on the criticism of the options for change. That criticism would have had more force had it contained some recanting of the decision taken by the annual conference of the Labour party last September.

If the nature of the threat has changed, and if the threat is reduced—which is generally accepted—there appears to be a more widespread acceptance in the House that there is no guarantee that there will be an immediate financial dividend. If there is to be a meaner and leaner force, we shall be looking for better equipment and conditions. If we are endeavouring to meet the demands of the demographic trough, with the forces trying to attract people of the right calibre, good conditions—not just of housing, but of holidays and pay—will be important factors. The forces will have to be better trained, which will be relatively more expensive than it is now.

Those who claim that there is an immediate peace dividend and that money can be swapped from one column to another—that it can be spent on health, education or other areas thought to be more socially desirable—fail to address the considerable financial consequences that will undoubtedly follow the necessary restructuring of the forces.

I cannot understand why the Government will not embark upon a full-scale defence review, especially as NATO is about to embark upon such a review, in which the issues of flexible response and forward defence will be up for debate. During the next month or so, consideration will be given to whether to adopt a policy of no first use for nuclear weapons. Those would be fundamental changes in NATO's doctrine. Why, then, are the Government so reluctant to embark upon a parallel examination of the United Kingdom position through a full-scale defence review?

I do not doubt that, in the foreseeable future, the need for NATO will remain. I understand the aspirations of those who wish for a different architecture for the security of Europe to be created through the conference on security and co-operation in Europe. However, we must remember that that organisation, as currently constituted, has certain inherent defects. For example, it operates only if there is unanimity. It includes such great military powers as San Marino. In its present form, it is not qualified for the sort of tasks that many people wish it to undertake. Unless and until it becomes so qualified, NATO will have to remain, although not necessarily in its present form, with its present priorities and subject to its present doctrines. It is essential that NATO maintains a unanimity of purpose. It is essential that, as far as possible, we ensure that the 16 countries of NATO stay together in a unanimity of purpose on how security can best be maintained.

During the past two or three days, Mr. Gorbachev has been at pains to argue that we should not use the language of winners and losers in relation to NATO and the Warsaw treaty organisations. One could say, "He would, wouldn't he?" His organisation has collapsed; it is NATO that has been sustained. It is hardly surprising that he would like to devaluate NATO and to suggest that its purpose has been achieved. There is no sensible option for the long-term security of Europe other than that a united Germany should remain in NATO.

There may be scope for imaginative protocols and arrangements that deal with the necessary steps to allay the apprehension and concern of the Soviet Union. In that, we may balance the question of how much we should give to ensure that Mr. Gorbachev does not come under unreasonable pressure. There are all sorts of sophisticated judgments to be made, but central to them and the basis on which they can properly be made is the general acceptance that a unified Germany within NATO will provide a keystone to the future security of Europe.

The issues that we are discussing should be the subject of a more open debate, as they are in the United States. Indeed, the defence periodicals from America tell us much about the Government's policies to which we do not have access in this country. There is a much publicised memorandum from the Minister of State for Defence Procurement. I think that many of the assumptions in that memorandum are deeply flawed and I should like to offer my assistance to the Secretary of State and his Ministers. I believe that common sense would be sufficient to persuade the Minister that there are flaws in his memorandum. As a precursor to the annual debate on the defence estimates, I suggest that that much-publicised memorandum be placed in the Library, where we can all see it. It could then form the basis of an intelligent exchange of views so that we can all share in the thinking of Defence Ministers.

We are discussing extremely important issues that change their character almost daily. Many of the decisions that will be made in the United Kingdom during the next six to 12 months will have far-reaching consequences. That being so, they should be made against the background of an informed, constructive and, if necessary, noisy debate about where the best interests of the United Kingdom lie. In the resolution of these issues, there is little doubt that the British Army will continue to play an important role. I join others in paying tribute to its achievements, not least in Northern Ireland.

7.8 pm

Mr. Michael Mates (Hampshire, East): Because it is such a rare event, I must be careful not to be too enthusiastic in agreeing with one part of what was said by the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers). I very much agree with what he said about the unfairness of the community charge on service men in general and on Ghurkas in particular. The Ghurkas are my constituents and my objections are well known and well publicised. I do not say that simply to criticise the Government. I hope that I am being constructive, because I know that it was not the wish of the Ministry of Defence. Unfortunately, the argument with the Department of the Environment and the Treasury was lost and, rightly, Defence Ministers must now live with that collective decision. However, as there is now a review of the community charge, I very much hope that, as a result of the debate and because of what I and my hon. Friends have said both publicly and privately, this matter will be put before it.

Unlike some of the other measures which seem to be needed for the community charge, this costs nothing and it will put right an injustice which has been strongly felt within the armed services, whose personnel are unique in

that they cannot choose where to live and, as a result of the circumstances in which they find their posting, are forced to pay the community charge. We should go back to an average share, which is what they paid under the old rating system, and which would be seen to be fair. Of course they must contribute, but a soldier may have a £500 fine attached to his posting which he cannot choose and that is seen as genuinely unfair. I hope that the Ministry will put that matter into the melting pot of discussions that are taking place at the moment.

Since we last had a service debate, the Select Committee has lost one of its members. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) has left as result of his resigning the Labour Whip. Much as I deeply resent the personal attacks that he has made on me behind my back and to the press in articles which are patently untrue and which are the subject of a complaint to the Press Council, it would be churlish of me not to record his valuable service during six years on the Committee, where his experience and expertise and the diligence with which he carried out his duties have been much appreciated by all his colleagues on both sides of the Committee. We are sorry to see him go.

We welcome in the hon. Member's place the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson). I hope that he will be happy serving with us. He maintains the 75 per cent. of Scots on the Opposition side of the Committee, for reasons which are best known to the Labour party, and which I would not try to analyse. I think that the sole English Labour Member had hoped for a little reinforcement, but I have no doubt that he will be happy with what he has got.

I must make brief remarks about the sixth report of the Committee on the fiscal security of military installations in the United Kingdom. Much has been said of the terrorist threat and I do not need to go over the background, but it was in the light of the enhanced threat and, most particularly, following the explosion at the Royal Marines school of music at Deal on 22 September 1989 in which 11 bandsmen were killed, that the Committee decided to follow up the report which the previous Committee had made in 1984. That report had concentrated on the future security arrangements for the royal ordnance factories and on the threat to the security of nuclear bases arising from protesters at that time which, thankfully, has now passed.

We devoted 20 paragraphs of our report to the security arrangements at royal ordnance factories, now under private ownership. We are not wholly satisfied with what we found. We doubt whether the Ministry of Defence was acting quite straightforwardly in 1988 in permitting MOD police to be replaced at Blackburn and Birtley by commercial security guards. We do not criticise the replacement of MOD police at Westcott and Bishopton by the new Royal Ordnance plc guard force, but we are anxious that the Ministry of Defence should take steps to remove the impression that the level of security has been lowered and that the Department should continue to take a close and informed interest in royal ordnance security arrangements.

Dr. Godman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Mates: The 10-minute rule is in operation, but I shall give way.

Dr. Godman: In paragraph 75 of the report, the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues talk about the need to monitor the quality of the police force at Bishopton. How would that monitoring take place?

Mr. Mates: I cannot answer the hon. Gentleman at length now. I am sorry to be restricted in my remarks. However, my hon. Friend the Minister has heard what he said, and it is his job to do exactly that. If I may go on to answer some of the other recommendations that we have made, I hope that that will help the hon. Gentleman.

That interest also applies to the other five royal ordnance factories, where both the Ministry and the police forces involved seek the continuation of an MOD police presence alongside a company guard force. Royal Ordnance has restricted the extra costs—around £1·2 million a year—which that would involve, but British Aerospace was well aware of the special position of MOD police at royal ordnance factories when it purchased the company. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to reassure us that a proper solution has now been found to the question of security arrangements at royal ordnance factories and that the company has accepted the expert advice of the Ministry of Defence and local police officers.

However, our major concern is with the growing use by the Ministry of Defence of commercial security companies. So far as we were able to publish them, the facts are set out in the report. About 56 sites are commercially guarded, at an annual cost of about £5 million. That is not a major financial commitment, and the vast majority of MOD and service sites are not commercially guarded. It is important to keep the matter in perspective. Commercial guarding is primarily used to release service personnel for other tasks. As we say in the report,

> "It is a fundamental part of the duties of service personnel to protect themselves and their bases."

That must not be overlooked.

However, such guarding duties mean that service personnel are not free to carry out other tasks for which they are trained. That makes the use of commercial security firms attractive. There are alternatives to replacing or supplementing service men with commercial security firms. Ministry of Defence police, who have full police powers and training, are already stretched and are expensive. The Royal Air Force has its own police force, over 3,000 strong. But the main policy choice lies between an expanded MOD civilian guard force and the wider use of contractors.

From our examination of the experience which the services and the MOD have had with commercial security companies and of the screening by such companies of potential employees, we cannot accept that further contracts should be awarded for commercial security guarding. As for existing contracts, many are apparently being satisfactorily performed, and the service directors of security showed no desire to lose the services of the companies concerned.

We would like tougher enforcement by the MOD of contractual sanctions against those companies which have not come up to scratch. At the moment, it seems that unsatisfactory levels of performance are tolerated for far too long because termination would leave a site unguarded. We recommend a searching review during the next few years of the security implications of using

[Mr. Mates]

commercial guards at every site where they are used and that consideration be given in every case to the possibility of replacement by an MOD guard force.

At the moment, the Ministry of Defence is getting what it pays for, no more and no less. In some cases it is a second-rate service and so a potentially dangerous one. Either it must spend more on getting a better service or provide it itself through direct employment of a guard force. As a politician and a former soldier, all my instincts point to the latter as the more sensible course of action.

I had hoped to make a few remarks on my own account about the wider scene as it affects the Army, but this is the first time that I have been caught by the 10-minute rule while having to speak on behalf of my Committee, to which I thought my first duty lay. Therefore, I shall simply say one thing.

A robust debate is going on inside and outside the Ministry of Defence about the options for the future, and that is right. I know, perhaps more than most at the moment, that everything that one reads in the newspaper about oneself is not true, and I am sure that that also applies to my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement. He has always had robust views on defence, some of which I have agreed with and some of which I have not, but all of which I have always enjoyed debating with him.

I advise one word of caution to everybody everywhere, inside and outside the House, when we are discussing the future structure of our services: do not let us forget or put in jeopardy the most precious asset that those services have —the men and women who serve in them. It is in that regard that talk of numbers, of battalions, of ships, of specific reductions long before we have had a chance maturely to decide what the residual threat is, if any, and where it is likely to occur, is putting the cart before the horse.

I am not alleging that my hon. Friend's remarks in that regard were correctly quoted: I make no comment about that, because I do not know. However, it behoves all of us to conduct the debate in a rational way, and that means to look at what is the residual threat, what it is that we shall need, the sort of way in which we must approach the matter and what the new NATO will look like. Then and only then should we start talking about numbers, places and people. To allow our service men to continue to operate in that area of uncertainty is bad for their morale, and bad for us as responsible people conducting this debate, and it serves nobody's interests.

7.18 pm

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): I want to argue this evening in favour of a radical review of, and eventually a radical reduction in, the defence budget and in NATO's overall defence budget. Now that the era of east-west confrontation is drawing to a close, we have a golden opportunity to begin to realise what has been referred to as the peace dividend. I take on board the point made by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) that it will be difficult to realise that dividend —which is why I go further than some of my hon. Friends might wish to go, and further than my party has gone in its latest policy document, "Looking to the Future".

The inevitable consequence of the radical reduction in defence spending now in prospect, combined with the increasing costs of military technology and development, is that the days of national armies in Europe are fast drawing to a close. Political logic and hard economics point to a future in which multinational armies will be trained and deployed together, use the same equipment, follow the same procedures and doctrines, and serve together as a single collective defence force.

In Europe, the natural focus for such a multinational defence force is the European Community. The long-term consequence—and by the long term, I mean the end of this decade or the beginning of the next century—of the ending of the cold war in Europe will be the establishment of what will be to all intents and purposes a European Community army backed up, as it must be, by common Community defence and foreign policy.

I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the officers and men of the various regiments of the Army and the Army Air Corps who played host to three parliamentary colleagues and myself over the past year, when we participated in the armed forces parliamentary scheme. The insight that I gained from that experience into the day-to-day workings and conditions of service men has proved invaluable. It certainly confirmed my admiration for the Army's high standards of professionalism and service. I pay tribute also to the hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) for organising that scheme, and to the Minister and his officials at the Ministry of Defence, who helped the scheme along.

One strong impression that I gained from participating in that scheme was the huge impact of the poll tax on service men and the resentment that that is causing. Soldiers are experiencing the inequity and raw injustice of the poll tax in perhaps its starkest form. It is impossible to defend a situation in which a private soldier is expected to pay the same poll tax as a general. The Government will pay a high political price for that among many of their traditional supporters in the armed services.

Last month, I organised, together with the hon. Member for Bosworth (Mr. Tredinnick), the first ever east-west conference of young elected politicians from almost all the countries of east, west and central Europe —including members of the USSR Supreme Soviet and politicians from north America. The Minister of State for the Armed Forces kindly attended and addressed that conference.

It was a great delight to spend time in the company of those young parliamentarians from the new democracies of eastern and central Europe. No one could do so without realising that the basic assumptions that previously underpinned British defence policy—based on the cold war and on confrontation between east and west—have collapsed. The great need now is to build a new policy on new foundations, based on a radical and searching review of our future defence requirements.

Everyone recognises the need for that—except, apparently, the British Government. Articles appear daily on that subject, and no intelligent debate on the armed forces could possibly take place without at least the outline of a fundamental defence review being sketched out—yet we are forced to conduct tonight's debate in a vacuum because of the Government's continuing and bizarre refusal even to acknowledge the need for such a review.

It is ironic that no country of the west needs the peace dividend more than the United Kingdom, because of its

traditionally high defence expenditure, yet no Government appears more reluctant to grasp that dividend than the present British Government. The strain on Britain's resources of sustaining a cold war military commitment over the past 40 years has been immense. In fact, it has been crippling. The cuckoo in the nest of our defence budgets has been our commitment to the central front. The cold war is over, the Warsaw pact is finished, and the USSR by itself no longer presents a realistic military threat to the west. Now is the time to begin to cast off our crippling burden of defence expenditure.

The Government plead the case for caution, yet other countries are forging ahead. The forthcoming United States defence budget will incorporate substantial cuts, and West Germany has announced a prospective reduction in its armed forces of almost 20 per cent. Those Governments recognise that, although there are worries surrounding the chaotic collapse of the Soviet empire, those worries are more for the Soviet peoples themselves than a realistic military danger to us.

As Jonathan Dean, the former United States ambassador to the MBFR talks recently argued, a 50 per cent. cut in NATO equipment and personnel over the next decade could realise defence budget savings of up to 30 per cent.—about $100 billion across NATO as a whole at today's prices. It is surely madness to tie up that money in arms and weapons one day longer than necessary when there are other, more urgent priorities to be met—particularly environmental priorities.

We ought to begin now the long-term withdrawal of the British Army of the Rhine as such and of RAF Germany from the central region. If British soldiers remain on the European continent into the next century, they should so so as part of a genuine European multinational force supported primarily out of Community funds. In that way, we could ensure that the future burden would be equally shared instead of falling disproportionately upon British taxpayers, as it has in the past.

That returns me to the need for closer European Community co-operation on defence. Even with today's inflated defence budgets, it is increasingly uneconomic for the nation states of western Europe to fulfil their procurement needs independently. It makes more and more sense to collaborate and procure jointly. At a time when defence budget cuts of 30 to 50 per cent. are being contemplated, individual national procurement policies will become simply impossible.

I realise that I am going further than my party's official policy and the views of some of my right hon. and hon. Friends. However, I believe that we need to enter in the future into an intimate collaboration of Community nations in both the procurement of weapons and the actual deployment of forces—including a possible single Community army. That will inevitably entail the convergence of national defence and foreign policies in Europe into a single Community policy. Such developments are not only inevitable because of the new context created by the ending of the cold war, and by the hard economic constraints that will be the direct consequence of major defence cuts, but are to be welcomed.

7.27 pm

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester, North): The hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) will forgive me if I do not follow him too much, save to comment that I disagree profoundly with the proposition that he put forward. I disagree with it almost as profoundly as I suspect and hope that members of the Labour Front Bench disagree with it. Unilateral cuts of the magnitude suggested by the hon. Member for Western Isles would be catastrophic for our own defence posture and for that of NATO. We have had success in MBFR, and the START talks have offered considerable possibilities all the way through because we maintain a sensible and strong defence posture. I was gladdened that that was substantially on the basis of cross-party agreement. I suspect that views of the type expressed by the hon. Member for Western Isles are being increasingly adopted by Labour, which will cause it to be regarded with great suspicion, and rightly so, by the electorate generally.

I commend the fact that we are having this single-service debate. I was profoundly sceptical about the reorganisation of the Ministry of Defence, with the abolition of single-service Ministers, because it seemed to be appropriate that there should be a Minister answerable in this place for each of the services. Those of us who did not like the reorganisation were reassured that there would be a single-service debate homing in on each of the three services—Navy, Army and Air Force—so that matters of relative detail could be aired on the Floor of the House from time to time, in the way that they ought to be aired.

I have the privilege of representing a substantial part of a garrison town—Colchester—which I share with my right hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, South and Maldon (Mr. Wakeham). I am proud to represent that constituency, which contains such a strong military element. During the quarter of a century and more that I have had the pleasure to represent the area, I have received nothing but kindness from the military, which is exemplified by the fact that I was dined out by the military corrective training centre just before my recent marriage. I was given a party at the centre and they strongly advised that I stay under custody for the evening because they had every intention of getting me above the level of 80 mg per 100 ml. I think they only marginally succeeded, but it was an interesting place to spend a couple of nights before one's wedding.

Speaking more seriously, the military corrective training centre is a splendid organisation. One of the triumphs of the Government is that the centre has been rebuilt. When I first became the Member of Parliament for Colchester, the centre was in tin nissen huts. It was the last military establishment in such huts. For years I campaigned for it to be rebuilt, and at last we got it. The former Secretary of State, my right hon Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger), opened the centre a couple of years ago and it was a splendid occasion.

I pay tribute to the work that the centre does. Considerable lessons are to be learnt by civilian prisons from the way in which it is organised. The centre has of course the advantage that all the soldiers under sentence are young and that there is a high ratio of soldiers under sentence to staff. My hon. Friends who are worried about the organisation of prisons should make an in-depth visit to the military corrective training centre, because there is much to be learned there.

It is a great privilege to represent Colchester, North. I have also been privileged to visit armed forces in all parts of the globe, wherever they serve. Some years ago I visited the Falklands as I led the first parliamentary delegation to the islands after the confrontation with the Argentinians.

[Sir Antony Buck]

I sought to go there on the task force, because there have always been parliamentarians actively involved where troops were in action. My father was in the 1914-18 war and he said that he could not understand a sudden disturbance in the trenches—it was a visit of parliamentarians in 1918.

The Whips prevented me from going on the task force because of the open-ended commitment that would be involved by my going there. None the less I had the privilege to visit the islands, leading the first parliamentary delegation after the confrontation.

The major lesson to be learned from the Falklands conflict is that it gave credibility to the whole of our western defence policy if the tough men of the Politburo were questioning whether "these so-and-so democracies" would ever do anything for democracy—would they just pass resolutions in the United Nations? We went to that massive expenditure of treasure and blood to defend the right of 1,800 people, mainly of British decent, to live in freedom. That demonstrated the western world's resolve, and also the sheer professionalism of our armed forces.

Let us remember our armed forces in the remoter parts of the world. I have also had the privilege of going to Belize. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement will mention some of those areas which are outside NATO in his winding-up speech. We have a battalion and some Harriers in Belize. They maintain stability in the area and it is universally accepted that their presence helps to maintain peace there. Having visited the country, I realise that it also gives additional expertise to the armed forces, which have the opportunity to train in the different circumstances there.

The main burden of our armed forces is to maintain peace in Northern Ireland and our commitment to the British Army of the Rhine. I have always been sceptical whether we need a commitment of 55,000 troops to the British Army of the Rhine, and I remain sceptical. As long as there is a substantial commitment to the central European front, that is what is needed. We should not think that there would be immediate savings if we brought some of those market forces home. There would in fact be an immediate increase in the amount of money required because of the necessary refurbishment of barracks here and of re-equipment and the reinstallation of troops on the home front. I hope that the Under-Secretary of State will mention the numbers of troops in the British Army of the Rhine.

One of the key issues for our defence forces and our defence posture is the maintenance of our links with the United States of America. I hope that a word may be said about the reciprocal arrangements with the American armed forces, because the link is very important. In any debate on defence we ought to pay tribute to the United States' commitment. It is remarkable that our allies in the United States maintain such a substantial number of troops in Europe. That should be acknowledged. The decoupling of the USA from the NATO alliance would be devastating to it.

I am constrained by the time limit imposed upon us in this debate and shall end as I began, by paying tribute to our armed forces. We are privileged that we have the opportunity to debate their affairs and to pay tribute to their professionalism and courage, and to the marvellous support that they get from their families. Service in Northern Ireland and elsewhere places a great strain on their families. I like the way in which the armed forces always talk about "married families"—presumably as opposed to the others, the unmarried ones. That is a historic remnant. We are lucky in the professionalism of our armed forces and in the support that troops get from their families, not only in Colchester but throughout the United Kingdom. It is a pleasure to have the opportunity to speak in this important debate.

7.37 pm

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): I recognise that many other hon. Members wish to speak, so I am obliged to confine my remarks to that aspect of Army operations that I know best and with which I have been so closely associated, directly and indirectly, for the past 20 years: the internal security of this kingdom in the face of terrorism, especially the Provisional IRA.

Sadly, it has become almost routine for Ministers to have to address the House about casualties inflicted on the Army as it performs its onerous responsibilities, placing itself between the terrorists and the law-abiding civilian community in Northern Ireland, Britain and Europe. It is a role that our soldiers have carried out in the most difficult circumstances with a self-restraint which sets them apart from probably any other Army in the world. On behalf of my party, I acknowledge with gratitude the sacrifice that our serving men and women continue to make.

Early in the report by the Select Committee on Defence, "The Physical Security of Military Installations in the United Kingdom", the point is made that there is ever a choice to be made between security and value for money. I am realistic enough to appreciate that. However, I wonder how one measures value for money in terms of lives of our troops or ultimately our civilian population.

I must pose a question—is it Government policy to tackle terrorism in a proactive or a reactive manner? My experience has been that the latter is the case and that the Government, not in a premeditated manner, but de facto, pursue an "acceptable level of violence" policy for purely fiscal reasons. That caution is paid for in innocent lives and provides the terrorist with the time and opportunity to alter his tactics. Thus the element of surprise is a constant weapon in the armoury of the terrorist. Surely, with the easing of tension between east and west in Europe, we should be seeing more of our military resources channelled towards resolving the grave internal security problem with which we have wrestled for so long.

Has the Minister looked carefully at the constraints placed on the operational needs of our troops in Northern Ireland as a result of the dearth of adequate helicopter hours? Will he concede that more of the considerable resources presently based in Germany could be better deployed to give operational flexibility in Northern Ireland? If he considers the recent deaths of four members of an Ulster Defence Regiment patrol as they travelled in a Land-Rover, he will fully understand that point.

Operational commanders are often frustrated in their efforts to pre-empt and pursue terrorists because of logistical difficulties. Helicopters are extremely expensive, but they are no more expensive flying in Northern Ireland than in Germany. I do not want to labour the point further, except to say that I have yet to meet a battalion

commander who does not feel that he is operationally inhibited and that his men are forced to endure too many avoidable risks because of the lack of that resource.

On the UDR, how pleased I was to read the Stevens report on the leaks inquiry and to find myself wholly vindicated in my opinion that no evidence would be found of an organised or widespread conspiracy to furnish loyalist paramilitaries with confidential information. I have noted carefully the Minister's response to my earlier intervention and I suspect from what he said that he, like many others, including myself, believes that the Stevens operation in which 28 innocent UDR men were arrested in a massive early Sunday morning operation was a callous and ill-judged political stunt. I am sure that neither of us would wish to see such a dangerous blunder repeated.

As I have previously asserted, I have no personal experience of bad apples in the regiment, although some people would like to suggest otherwise for political reasons. Those people, either foolishly or maliciously, play into the hands of the Provisional IRA and help to prolong the suffering of our community. There are no bad apples, but I have known far too many bruised apples—those who, after facing the unrelenting threat of imminent murder over many years, become physically, mentally and emotionally drained. I welcome the provision for each permanent cadre soldier of a warrant for himself, his wife and young children so that they can go to Great Britain, the Isle of Man or the Channel islands for an annual holiday. I hope that that is the beginning of a new awareness of the need to care for those who constantly live under such stressful conditions.

I ask the Minister to give serious thought to extending that concession to the part-time UDR soldier, who probably lives an even more precarious existence, especially in his civilian employment. To start with, perhaps, the warrant could be given to those who have earned their annual bounty by carrying out the required operational duties, training and camp commitment. I hope that the Minister will look sympathetically at the real need here.

I draw the Minister's attention to the lack in Northern Ireland of any "exercise executive stretch" scheme for employers of members of the Territorial Army. Indeed, the scheme could also be applied to the employers of members of the UDR. I understand the security difficulties, but I suggest that a similar scheme would be useful.

It would surprise many people if they knew how many serving soldiers in Northern Ireland, particularly part-time members of the UDR, have to sacrifice their annual summer holiday to attend camp. Although some have to do that for security reasons, so that they do not draw undue attention to their membership of the regiment, others find that after 20 years, bosses are not altogether amenable or co-operative. The sacrifice of a holiday week puts pressure on family time and can create domestic problems. I hope that that aspect of soldier welfare can be examined and that a subtle programme for re-educating employers can be undertaken. We should not expect even the stoutest and bravest soldiers to endure, as many have, 20 years of mental and often physical brutality from the terrorist and yet to remain unscathed.

As we have seen over the past 20 years, terrorism does not respond to reasoning or to concessions, no matter how generous or well intentioned. It will recede only if it faces a community that remains resolute to withstand what it knows to be evil. In this democratic society, we as a community depend, in the last resort, on our Army acting in support of the civil power. It is therefore imperative, despite overall financial constraints, that we take adequate steps to ensure that the Army is not deployed in the Northern Ireland theatre in a purely reactive role. The adequate resourcing, welfare and morale of our forces, especially in Northern Ireland, must be seen to be primary and constant concerns of the House in general and of the Government in particular.

7.46 pm

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): I want to open with a word of advice for the Opposition Front Bench. The Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers), made a clear reference to what he would do about tanks. He said that he wanted an order placed for them and that he thought that there was also a good role for a mobile strike force. He was talking about increased expenditure and I advise him to be careful when he goes to his party conference this year. I suspect that the authentic voice of the Labour party will be talking far more about the peace dividend this year than he believes. Let him beware. We shall all watch with interest to see how the conference goes.

It is almost a year since we had our previous debate on the Army. As many hon. Members have said this evening, if one reads that debate it is incredible to see how far we are removed from our thinking last year. However, there is one inescapable fact. People talk about the Warsaw pact and the NATO Alliance as if they were both still in being. The fact is that the Warsaw pact is dead in military terms, it is dead in political terms and it has no relevance. With the greatest respect to Mr. Gorbachev, it is nonsense for him still to try to create the illusion of a balance between the two forces and for him to call, therefore, for a joint reduction. None of us should pay any attention to that.

It is logical that we should look at a reshaping of the structure and composition of our armed forces against the changes that have taken place in Europe. There is a diminished threat of a land battle in Europe and that must mean a total rethink of the composition of our armed forces in Germany and of NATO armed forces as well. I am not seeking to undermine the morale of our armed forces in saying that; it is a fact.

Whether one is serving with a tank regiment in Germany or with a parachute battalion in the United Kingdom, one knows that the chessmen on the board have moved. Therefore, we should react to that. The case for restructuring has been made. Also, a clear case has been made for an expansion of our air mobility strike force. I was delighted to hear my hon. Friend the Minister say that we need a force that can hit hard and fast at longer ranges. That leads me to the inescapable conclusion that he must be talking about some form of airborne formation and, I hope, an enlarged one.

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): You would, wouldn't you?

Sir Jim Spicer: Indeed I would.

In that context, I am quite certain that Ministers and their advisers in the Ministry of Defence will have read with interest an article in *The Times* of 14 May by General Sir Geoffrey Howlett, the newly retired commander-in-chief of allied forces, north. He made the case for that new force to be built up not as an airborne brigade but as an

[Sir Jim Spicer]

airborne division. His wealth of experience and his role as a NATO commander must lead us to take note of what he said. He called for 5 Airborne Brigade, 24 Air Mobile Brigade and the Commando Brigade to be brought together under one umbrella to form an air mobile division. Of course that will be costly—everyone accepts that—but, equally, there must be some offset in the changes that will inevitably take place on the land front in Europe.

There is not much point in thinking about such an organisation unless we also think of the back-up that will have to come from the Territorial Army. For the past 25 years we have relied on calling upon young men to join the TA because of the reality of a Soviet threat in Europe. To say the least, that threat has diminished over the past few months, and I hope that it will diminish even further. What will now be the incentive for ordinary young men willingly to join the TA? What will we say to them? Will we say, "You have a role—we have a need of you"? I would seek to link the new air mobile division, which I hope will be formed, to an enhanced role for the TA.

There is nothing new in defence terms. I was G3 of 16 Airborne Division when it was disbanded and it became 16 Para Brigade. I would love to see that division reformed, because in every major city in the United Kingdom there would be a parachute battalion that could easily be linked to its regular opposite number as a regular air mobile battalion. I have not expanded on this as much as I should like, but we would certainly get the recruits for such a division. We must offer young men adventure and the opportunity to travel. They would get that as TA soldiers within an airborne formation to a much greater extent than they would anywhere else.

There are people who say that we can exercise our options in the immediate future. I do not think that we can. We must assess the threat, as has been said on both sides. Who can say what the threat will be in one year, let alone in 20 years? Beyond that, until December, when the first elections in unified Germany are held, we must keep every option open. I say that because there is just an outside chance that the Social Democrats might win the election in Germany. If they did so, they would immediately form a coalition with the Greens and, as has been stated, there would be the possibility of a neutralised German state outside the NATO alliance. The thought of that fills me with fear.

Germany's membership of NATO is of supreme importance to the peace of the continent. I pay tribute to Chancellor Kohl for all that he has done in the past and I hope for his resounding success and that of his allies in the elections in a united Germany. For the sake of every person not only in this country but in the rest of the world, I hope and pray Chancellor Kohl will win the election and that we shall not have to live with the Greens and Social Democrats in government.

7.55 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Unlike the hon. Member for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer) I should have thought that a neutral Germany was something that we could look forward to with great pleasure rather than fear. The history of Europe shows that the level of arms in Germany, rather than the prospect of it being neutral, has frightened people for most of this century.

The question that I ask has been posed in every debate on the armed services and on the defence estimates. Have the Government a defence review or not? The official position is that the Government are not carrying out a defence review; they are looking for options for change. Who is in charge of options for change? Is it the Secretary of State or the Minister of State? The worst aspect is that the debate seems to be conducted by leaks and counter-leaks rather than discussion of the future of our defence forces.

I understand the arguments that were deployed by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) and one or two other hon. Members, about the effect that a full review would have on morale. The morale of our armed forces will be damaged far more if personnel learn about what is happening through leaks. They listen to rumours and, on the whole, they are kept in the dark. I make a strong plea that we want the most open public debate about what our armed forces are supposed to do in the future, what options they have, and how we can most effectively respond. We must get away from the idea that most of our defence policy can be conducted and discussed in secret rather than in proper public debate.

It is typical of the Government's approach that they believe in deceit and duplicity. They publicly welcome the removal of cruise missiles from Greenham Common but, at the same time, encourage the Americans to bring back those same missiles as sea-launched weapons.

I wish to raise three specific matters, the first of which relates to troops. Several hon. Members have said that we shall find it increasingly difficult to recruit 18-year-olds into the armed forces simply because there are far fewer 18-year-olds and competition for them will be increasingly strong. We shall need far fewer 18-year-olds if we can get troop reductions in West Germany. Obviously, by 1997, we shall also have fewer troops in the far east and Hong Kong. However, there will still be major recruitment problems, so we must look at the balance.

At the moment, our troops spend time in West Germany, Northern Ireland and elsewhere. As we reduce our commitment for troops outside the United Kingdom we must look at the proportion of time that they will serve in Northern Ireland and, in particular, take into account the effect on their families, wives and parents and the possible pressure on them not to complete a long stint abroad. As part of the review we must look at the role of the Army in Northern Ireland and, possibly, the training of Army personnel if they are to spend most of their time in a role in Northern Ireland rather than in a combat role.

My second point relates to an issue that has already been referred to—the future of the tank. Hon. Members have questioned whether there is now any prospect of tanks rolling across the plains of Europe from the east and have wondered what our response should now be. There is also the question whether we can do the same things much more effectively using helicopters rather than tanks. We must also consider the number of orders that might be placed for a new generation of tanks.

However, my main point relates specifically to the training of the people who will use the tanks. In recent years there has clearly been growing resentment in West Germany about the training there of our people in our tanks. I believe that the continuation of such training will

now be totally unacceptable to the West Germans. Indeed, I am amazed that people have put up with the nuisance and the difficulties caused by that training. It is almost certain that we shall have to look elsewhere for those training facilities.

Have the Government considered whether the level of tank training that now takes place in West Germany would be acceptable in the United Kingdom? We must bear in mind the amount of land that will be required for any such future tank training.

That brings me to a question that I have raised many times in the House—the amount of land that is owned by the military in the United Kingdom, and the use to which it is put. I believe that the military still has 250,000 hectares, much of which was grabbed during the first and second world wars, when no one really questioned whether it was essential. Since then, evidence has continued to suggest that the military has far more land than is absolutely necessary.

There was a lot of pressure in 1968 and 1969 to set up an inquiry into defence land. There was also the Nugent committee review between 1971 and 1973. Considering that that committee comprised many people from the Ministry of Defence and was perhaps biased towards their point of view, it came up with some fairly strong recommendations for the release of a great deal of the defence land. I accept that since then some of the land has been released, but a lot more land could be. Much of the land that has been released has been on the urban fringes rather than in areas of outstanding natural beauty.

The Ministry of Defence now seems to be considering ways in which it can get a bit of extra land. It put forward proposals for an extra range at Luddesdown in Kent and blew its proposals for bagging a large area of extra land at Knoydart in Scotland. On both occasions the Government seemed to back off—first because of a public inquiry, and secondly because of public pressure. Some of the current leaks suggest that if troops return from Germany, the Government will need to look for extra land. Worryingly, the Minister of State for the Armed Forces made it clear that the Ministry of Defence is looking for extra land. However, I would argue strongly that it should be looking to release land, especially in Pembroke and in the Pennines.

I realise that there are major problems with some of those areas of land, because they contain unexploded ammunition and bombs. However, I plead with the Government to work hard at speeding the process of removing and disposing of that ammunition and those bombs from such areas, and then returning the land to public access.

All the evidence relating to the options that the Government are considering suggests that defence expenditure on equipment will be reduced over the next three or four years. If that is the case, it has serious implications for the defence contractors in this country. We should be considering an arms conversion agency. In the changing circumstances, we cannot justify this country continuing to spend so much on arms and we cannot expect other countries to continue to spend as much with our arms manufacturers.

I do not want to see people put out of jobs. I do not want people to have to face the choice of continuing to produce further useless weapons or becoming unemployed, because I know the choice that most people would make. I want to ensure that those people can make useful things and that we do get a peace dividend not simply for the Government, but for those who have worked in armaments who should be enabled to work in other areas.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald), I firmly believe that the message that the Government—and my own Front Bench—must now accept is that over the next few years the British people will be looking for a peace dividend. They do not accept that, if the United States can start cutting $17 billion from its defence expenditure and there can be a 20 per cent. cut in arms in West Germany and substantial peace dividends in East Germany and the Soviet Union, there cannot be a peace dividend in the United Kingdom—

Mr. Rogers: I must advise my hon. Friend that I said that there would be a peace dividend, but not an immediate one. The changes that need to take place to adapt to the new political—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) is already out of time.

Mr. Bennett: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Before my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) rose to intervene, I noted that I had another minute to go, in which I would have emphasised that, yes, we want a peace dividend and it must be planned. We must ensure that we get a peace dividend over the next few years and that we do not pass up that opportunity.

8.5 pm

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) is completely wrong about military land. I was partly responsible for the approach on the Knoydart peninsula, when the new Secretary of State's first decision was that we should not proceed. The estate was subsequently broken up and access is restricted. The Ministry of Defence would have served the hon. Gentleman's interests far better than he perhaps appreciates.

However, I agree with the hon. Gentleman's point about the debate being about leaks. There are two sorts of secrets in the Ministry of Defence—the military secrets, which are kept impeccably, and the other secrets, which seem to get out according to whose interests might be served by ensuring that they get into whatever newspaper might suit. I assume that the rumour that the Treasury is looking for a cut of £1 billion as a peace dividend came from the Treasury, so I do not accuse the Ministry of Defence of that. The rumour smacked of Treasury tricks of the worst order. I hope that the Chief Secretary to the Treasury or his officials will read the *Hansard* report of this debate with care because there is a surprising unanimity —certainly among Conservative Members—about how we should treat the changing events in relation to finance.

I have attended these service debates for many years now and I am sure that my colleagues who are also regular attenders will agree that there has been a complete change of tone in this debate. It has been a much more thoughtful occasion, in which there has been much closer agreement between hon. Members of all parties. That is commendable and in the national interest.

The second leak that we seem to be debating is that my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement has made some suggestions that are now circulating within the Ministry of Defence, and that in some way that

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represents a split and an outrageous difference of opinion within the Ministry. One of the saddest things is that it is extremely difficult for Ministers to put out their original thoughts if those thoughts are subsequently leaked. There must be debate within Departments. There must be thought and there must be an appreciation of change.

If my hon. Friend's paper has been properly reported, I must confess to disagreeing with quite a bit of it and I should be happy to debate it, but I hope that all Ministers are putting forward their own ideas—not only in the Ministry of Defence. This is a moment of change, and change must be debated both within and without Government, and in the House. It is extremely important that the House should give its opinions.

Something that worries me is that, from the Baltic to the Mediterranean, we have unstable Governments in the very countries that have caused us most of the wars in Europe for the past 2,000 years. It would be lunacy to imagine that, simply because the Warsaw pact has collapsed—as my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer) has pointed out—we should now drop our guard. The threat may well come in some different and unknown way. The history of warfare shows that that is often the case.

For ourselves, pulling out of Germany will be a long and expensive business, as will be the case for the Russians when they pull out of the Warsaw pact. Without a substantial reduction in numbers, we do not have the accommodation to bring the British Army of the Rhine back to the United Kingdom at present. We have spent hundreds of millions of pounds on building the Germans some fine barracks, hospitals and workshops, but that is history and we must live with it.

I was more sorry to hear that some exercises had been cancelled as a result of the changes. That is neither good for morale nor a sensible economy. It is not fair on the troops. I do not know the details, but I ask Ministers to be careful before changing the carefully organised routine of BAOR. I note that the Secretary of State said on 9 March at the Royal United Services Institute:

"there could be a need for flexible and more mobile forces, properly equipped, well trained and well motivated".

Many of my hon. Friends and some Opposition Members have said that that is the future.

It will come as no surprise to Ministers to learn that I believe that helicopters are an extremely important part of any Army, whether we remain as we are or change our position. The Defence Select Committee report on the EH101 said:

"MOD's consideration of the requirement for support helicopters, and the way in which such a requirement should be met, stretches back to the mid 1970's and the matter needs urgent resolution. Indeed, MOD have in the past contributed to their own difficulties, as a result of their inability to bring themselves to a position where their philosophy for mobility on the battlefield of the 1990's and beyond could be stated, and thus a firm requirement determined."

That puts it in a nutshell. The military has never made up its mind. It is ready to blame Westland. My hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer) and I have many Westland employees in our constituencies. I have no doubt that Westland is often incompetent, but it certainly deals with a difficult customer. If only the Government could take the military, shake it hard and say, "What do you really want? Get on and order it," we might make some progress.

The 24 Air Mobile Brigade is no more mobile than a bicycle battalion. If we took enough helicopters to give 24 Brigade as many helicopters as its United States, French or German equivalent, there would be no helicopters left in the Air Force or the Army. That is the state of play of our air mobility.

While I entirely welcome the statement made in the Navy debate by the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement that he proposes to go ahead with the EH101 naval version, I hope that the promise of the then Secretary of State for Defence that

"the Government have decided to introduce the Utility EH101 to meet that requirement"—[*Official Report*, 9 April 1987; Vol. 114, c. 471.]

will be met. That was three years ago. We were all pleased to have that announcement, but nothing further has happened.

I entirely share the view of many of my hon. Friends that the Territorial Army must have a brighter future. It must have a larger proportion of the Army's total budget. Its share is still small. The TA is tackling the problem of officers to some extent. The problem varies from one end of the country to the other, but the fact remains that busy young men who are the sort of leaders needed to keep the TA on the road are the very people who are keeping industry and commerce going. While it is not difficult to recruit in London, in many parts of the country finding the right grade of officers and keeping them is a problem.

Whatever the mythology may be, pay matters. Paying all sections of the TA generously would be no bad thing. My hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith) said that the TA could perhaps become part of Regular Army units. That is an interesting idea, which should perhaps be pursued. Until the Regular Army takes the TA more seriously, the TA will have problems. I suggest again that recruiting for the TA should become the responsibility of the Regular Army. That would concentrate the mind of the Army. It would be its money and it would see at first hand why young soldiers do not stay in the TA.

I am delighted, as we all are, with the political changes that have taken place recently, but I do not feel any more secure militarily speaking than 12 months ago. This is no time to drop our guard.

8.13 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): One thing on which we can all agree this evening, if on nothing else, is that this debate takes place against an amazing backdrop of momentous events in eastern Europe and, indeed, western Europe. For the first time, the map of Europe is being redrawn peacefully. It is not being done by force of arms; it is not coming about as a result of a military defeat or a military victory. It is absolutely breathtaking. Events are moving so fast that it is difficult for us to keep up with them.

Among all those who never predicted the changes, there seems to be a welter of experts telling us how they took place and why. Ministers are among the worst offenders in that respect. The Minister's opening speech was an example of it. We heard that it is all effectively the result of the nuclear weapons of the west bringing the Soviets to their senses. That is a one-dimensional, simplistic

approach. The theory is particularly prevalent among the right wing of the military establishment, both in Britain and in the United States. If I remember rightly, they are the same people who were for ever telling us how far the west was behind the Soviets in terms of nuclear warheads, conventional weapons and technology. The Minister himself said that, although the Soviets were withdrawing from central Europe, we must bear it in mind that they have enormous strength in conventional weapons, far greater than ours, so we must keep our conventional defences.

How the hell will the Soviets get to us if we have a conventional war? Will they have to fight their way across Poland, Czechoslovakia and a united Germany before they make contact with us? The completely different scenario must be taken into account by the Government when considering the balance of conventional forces.

The Prime Minister claims some sort of fame for having discovered Mikhail Gorbachev. She is like a political equivalent of Hughie Green on "Opportunity Knocks." She says, "We discovered this man." Mikhail Gorbachev is certainly the political catalyst for all the enormously important events that are unfolding around us. If anyone qualifies for Hegel's definition of a world spirit or as a world historical figure, it must be Mikhail Gorbachev. He opened up visions of a new order that were unimaginable even a year ago when we had the Army debate.

For so dramatically changing the world order, Mikhail Gorbachev is paying a great price. He might even pay the price of his life. That is always a possibility, given the tension within the Soviet state. Certainly, he could pay the lesser price of losing his political office. Whatever happens to him, nothing can alter the fact that he has enabled the single most important event in Europe since the Russian revolution of 1917 to take place. Whatever else happens, his legacy will undoubtedly outlive him.

What has been our response? It has been pathetic. Gorbachev has risked everything. We in the west have offered little or nothing. In the United States at the summit, President Bush denied the Soviets favoured nation status on trade, something that they desperately need. He denied the Soviets that on the same day as he reconfirmed it for China, which was celebrating the first anniversary of the Tiananmen square massacre. What message does that send back to the people in the Soviet Union?

Gorbachev was lectured by the Senate on the position of Lithuania, but the Senate approved the invasion of Panama. A great deal of hypocrisy is flying around as Mr. Gorbachev tries to work wonders. We stand back and say, "If you succeed, that will be great. If you fail, it will be unpleasant but don't expect us to do much to help you." That is no response to the momentous events that we are witnessing.

The Prime Minister seems to like Mr. Gorbachev, but she uses him for photo opportunities rather than offering to take radical steps in this country to match what he is doing in his. Mr. Gorbachev risks all and we risk absolutely nothing. There is no imagination or vision in British politics at present. Our response is pathetic. Everyone says that we must not take any chances. There is a man in the Soviet Union taking enormous chances, but we are not prepared to take any. Why do we not catch the infectious spirit of optimism and say, "We might run some risks, but they are not the risks that Gorbachev is running or that the people of the east are running"?

The Warsaw pact is crumbling and now it is no threat to the west. Many of us never saw it as a threat, but we were laughed at and scorned when we said so. On the Government Front Bench there is only one politician of rank who is going some way to respond to the new situation the Minister of State for Defence Procurement. At least he is trying. I hope that I am not doing his glittering political career any terminal damage by saying so. I listened to his Radio 4 interview, which was good and intriguing. He talked about "very substantial savings" as a result of events in the east.

I understand that the paper produced by the Cabinet defence and overseas policy committee makes a number of radical proposals, which deserve a wide audience. They should be considered sympathetically by the hon. Gentleman's colleagues. At least the hon. Gentleman has made a start and has gone some way to match the great events in the east. We must congratulate him on being so courageous among such a timorous group of colleagues in such a timid Cabinet.

I have some modest proposals for redrawing our defence strategy. Everyone understands that we shall have a united Germany. I said that when I was in the United States talking to all the clever think tanks. The Americans said that that would not happen, and the Soviets said that they were not prepared to allow it. I asked what they would do if the people voted with their feet—would they send the tanks in? Unfortunately, many people in this country, in the United States and in the Soviet Union were unable to predict the united Germany.

The united Germany should be outside NATO and the Warsaw pact and it should be declared a demilitarised zone. I do not know what Conservative Members might think, but the opinion polls of East and West Germany show that that is the desire of the majority of Germans. Their views should at least be considered.

I noted what the Minister said about the withdrawal of Russian troops from central Europe, but why are we talking about the maintenance of the British Army of the Rhine? There is no short-term requirement for British troops to remain on German soil.

I believe that NATO should be disbanded as a military organisation and that it should become more of a political one based on the Western European Union or the North Atlantic Assembly.

Mr. Conway: Oh!

Mr. Banks: Obviously the hon. Gentleman does not have much time for the WEU, but I am a member of it and I am going there tomorrow—perhaps that is why he does not like it. At least the WEU attracts people with some imagination, which is more than can be said for the pedants on Conservative Benches.

We should also consider the withdrawal of nuclear weapons and bases from European soil. The defence of Europe must be a European responsibility, and I want the European defence dimension taken into account. As the European Community moves towards political union, it should take on defence responsibilities with the eventual objective of a European Community stretching from the Atlantic to the Urals—the common European home talked of by Gorbachev and others.

The people of the United Kingdom, of east and west Europe and of north America accept that there is a peace dividend. There are many social pressures here and in

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other countries that must be addressed, but while the military is eating up so much of our budgets those pressures cannot be lessened. That is why the peace dividend must be seized, and that is why I hope that the Minister of State for Defence Procurement will have his day.

Enormous, wonderful events have taken place. This is a time of imagination, verve and elan, but I see none of that on the Conservative Benches but for one single exception. I hope that the Minister will be joined by some allies when Ministers come to discuss in detail how the British Government will redefine our defence policies.

8.23 pm

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): Nearly half the Labour Members who have spoken today said that there should be an immediate defence review. I am sure that a major defence review is going on right now, but it is different from the previous great defence review that was carried out in 1981.

I remember the 1981 defence review very well, because certain misguided individuals in the Ministry of Defence suggested that drastic cuts should be made in the British Army of the Rhine. I was the Army Minister at that time and it was fairly easy to repel those arguments. First, we did not have the barracks or the trainee areas in this country to take back 30,000 men, particularly as the bulk of our armoured regiments and our gunner regiments served in Germany and had particularly heavy requirements for training areas. Secondly, it would have cost money to impose those cuts because of the redundancy terms that were in force. The extra cost of demobilising men as they stepped off the ferry would have been carried for about seven years. Therefore, BAOR remained unscathed.

Now, as the Warsaw pact has disintegrated and as German reunification will soon be completed, it is only too easy to imagine that we should be required to reduce the size of our forces in Germany from their present level of about 60,000 to about 20,000 in nine years' time. Nine years ago it was difficult to imagine that BAOR could cease to be our main defence commitment. Now it is difficult to imagine that it could possibly continue at anything like its present size for another nine years.

It is clear that any change will have a profound impact on the size, structure and life of the Army. For the first time in living memory it will mean that the bulk of the Army will be stationed at home. On 1 April last year, 66,000 out of 140,000 trained soldiers in our Army were serving overseas. That was a normal proportion. In the past 40 years, more than half our trained soldiers have regularly served overseas and that has meant that domestic turbulence has been normal. It is now probable that, in the comparatively near future, four fifths of our Army will be stationed regularly at home. That will have a profound impact on the way in which the Army receives a great deal of its professional support.

An Army largely based overseas needs special hospitals, schools and large legal departments to deal with foreign nationals. That has led to the swelling of specialist corps. An Army stationed at home will still need a great deal of professional support, but I am sure that some of our specialist corps could be cut drastically. Fighting units will always need doctors who are trained to go into combat, but I should be astonished if, in 10 years' time, we needed a Royal Army Medical Corps and even today I doubt whether we need a separate Royal Army Dental Corps.

I was glad to read reports—I hope that they are accurate and that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary can confirm this—that plans are being drawn up to merge some of the smaller corps such as the Royal Army Pay Corps and the Royal Army Veterinary Corps into a new Adjutant-General's Corps. That is a sensible administrative move. There may also be scope for setting up a quartermaster-general's corps, which could include the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, the Royal Corps of Transport and the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

There will certainly be a need to revise the future equipment requirement of the Army. As the threat of a major armoured battle on the central plains of Europe recedes, so does the need for a brand new Army battle tank. There are solid diplomatic grounds for not cancelling re-equipment projects while the discussions on the future of Germany are at a crucial phase and while problems have arisen in the CFE negotiations, but the Ministry of Defence has had ample experience of delaying contracts, and cutting costs must take priority over speed of delivery.

Research into new forms of armament and gunnery must continue. It would be a pity if the Iraqis were to have a monopoly on that sort of long-range development. In a world that will continue to be a dangerous place, we must maintain an Army that is versatile and flexible. As many of my hon. Friends have said, that means keeping the largest possible number of infantry battalions. Those battalions need not all have the same role and the same training.

We shall need well-equipped, highly trained forces capable of rapid deployment inside and outside Europe. There is almost a majority of hon. Members present tonight who served in the Parachute Regiment. I too believe that that force must be based on the Parachute Regiment and the Royal Marine Commandos. The need for the Special Air Services is also likely to grow rather than diminish.

However, some battalions will have a more limited role and some of them could become hybrid, half regular and half reserve. The reservists in such hybrid battalions should have a commitment similar to the old ever-readies. Some of my hon. Friends will remember that the ever-readies in the 1960s had a higher training commitment than the normal Territorial Army volunteers and could be called up at short notice. For that commitment, the ever-readies received substantial extra annual funding.

The new ever-readies could be required to do a short period of basic training with the Regular Army. Indeed, in practice I expect that many of the new ever-readies would be ex-Regular soldiers. They would be expected to serve a month or two each year with their regular unit. They would have a high call-up ability and would be paid at least £1,000 a year for that commitment. While doing their annual training with their battalion, they would also receive Regular Army pay. Such an expanded reserve service will become possible once the bulk of the Army is stationed at home and it becomes unusual for battalions to move far from their home bases.

I wish Ministers well in their study of options for change and I hope that their thorough-going review will

take into account the need to improve the quality of our reserve forces. The Territorial Army has served us well for the past 40 years. It has a great role in the future.

8.33 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I wish at the outset to thank the private office of the Minister of State for the Armed Forces for handling a particularly tragic constituency case.

My speech will be about the accountability of the security services, and it will be partly about the proposition that, if sexual abuse of boys in care is known to the state and to the British military, it is simply unacceptable to do nothing about it and to allow it to go on. In my view, the situation is somewhat worse than the security services smearing politicians.

I watched, as did a number of colleagues, on the night of 1 June a BBC programme in which a former Army intelligence officer at Lisburn, a captain, passed on information about the scandal at Kincora to a senior MI5 officer, Mr. Ian Cameron, at HQ Northern Ireland in 1975, only to be told in the strongest possible terms to desist from further investigation into alleged sexual assaults on children in the home. Do Minister accept that view of events that will have been brought to their attention?

Furthermore, the captain also purported to point out that, when he was interviewed by the Terry inquiry in 1982, he gave the police officers carrying out the investigation details of the information that he had passed on to MI5 seven years earlier. Not a word about the captain's knowledge of the scandal appears in the information supplied to Parliament by the Terry report, and it is clear that all details of MI5 and intelligence information about the affairs were deliberately suppressed by the authorities to avoid the inevitable parliamentary demands for a proper judicial inquiry into what had taken place.

A number of important questions that should be answered have been put to the Prime Minister.

First, why did MI5 order this captain to stop his investigation into what has now been established as one of the most notorious cases of child sex abuse in Britain in recent years?

Secondly, did either Detective Superintendent Caskey of the RUC or Detective Superintendent Harrison of the Sussex police inform Sir John Hermon and/or Sir George Terry that MI5 was refusing to answer their questions about Army intelligence knowledge of Kincora?

Thirdly, did Sir John Hermon or Sir George Terry inform the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland that MI5 was failing to answer questions put by the police officers carrying out the inquiry?

Fourthly, if the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland was informed about the obstruction, what steps did he take to ensure MI5's co-operation and why did he give in Parliament such fulsome praise to Sir George Terry's inquiry?

Fifthly, bearing in mind that the Terry inquiry was set up by the Government, why did no Minister intervene and insist that MI5 assist the police in the matter?

Sixthly, when Parliament was being repeatedly misled by the conclusions of the Terry report over Army intelligence knowledge of the scandal, why did none of those who knew about MI5's refusal to co-operate with the inquiry bother to bring that to the attention of the House of Commons?

Sixthly—[HON. MEMBERS: "Seventhly."] I should have said seventhly—what is the earliest known recorded date of a reference made to Clockwork Orange in Ministry of Defence files? If Conservative Members are sceptical, I remind them that my contribution to the last Army debate on 8 June, according to *Hansard*, prompted the Ministry of Defence eventually to give more details of what actually happened in the case of Colin Wallace.

Eighthly, what became of the copy of Clockwork Orange which was typed by Miss Penny Sadler at Army HQ Northern Ireland and which Colin Wallace gave to Lieutenant-Colonel Jeremy Railton on leaving Northern Ireland in February 1975?

Ninthly, who authorised Miss Sadler to undertake work on the Clockwork Orange project? Tenthly, in the light of public statements allegedly made by some of those who took part in the raid by members of the Army information services on Aldergrove airport, will the Secretary of State reconsider his earlier statement on this matter and say whether captured IRA weapons and explosives were carried by those who took part in the raid and whether a bomb was planted on that occasion in the Ulster Defence Regiment headquaters in Antrim?

Following the receipt of documents from the file which Mr. Colin Wallace sent to the Prime Minister on 1 November 1984, was the Director of Army Security, Major General Garrett, consulted about their contents and about the role of Mr. Wallace at HQ Northern Ireland? Bearing in mind the fact that the documents written by Mr. Peter Broderick and the Institution of Professional Civil Servants and enclosed with the file which Colin Wallace sent to the Prime Minister on 1 November 1984 clearly contradicted Government statements to Parliament during that period, what steps were taken by the Ministry of Defence to establish the reasons for the obvious conflict between those accounts and the Government's version of the same events?

Why were Mr. Peter Broderick, Mr. Michael Taylor and Lieutenant Colonel Jeremy Railton not interviewed by the authorities as a result of the information contained in the file which Mr. Colin Wallace sent to the Prime Minister on 1 November 1984? Following the discovery of documents relating to Mr. Wallace's case in 1989, why was Mr. Peter Broderick not consulted by the MOD as to Mr. Wallace's allegations and the nature of his employment in the information policy unit at Army HQ Northern Ireland? What is the earliest known recorded date when the Kincora boys home was mentioned in MOD files?

In the light of the Minister of State's statement to the House on 30 January, will the Secretary of State comment on the contents of the letter from Brigadier Rous, Director of Army Public Relations, to Mr. Robert Parker of Channel 4 on 23 July 1987 regarding Colin Wallace? On what date did Mr. Peter Broderick write to Major-General Peter Leng asking for the release of information for use in the Clockwork Orange project?

To which Government Departments was Mr. Wallace's document entitled "Political and Security Implications Regarding the Disclosure of Security Classified Information to Assist in the Investigation of the Allegations Relating to the Kincora Boys Hostel, Belfast" circulated between 1984 and 1989? What criteria were used when separating papers relating to Mr. Wallace's case

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

between the office of the Permanent Under-Secretary and the Deputy Under-Secretary, CM? Was the information policy unit at Army HQ Lisburn responsible for planning and implementing psychological operations in Northern Ireland and, if so, who authorised the setting up of its terms of reference?

Bearing in mind the repeated assurances given to Parliament by Ministers, that over the years there have been the "most thorough inquiries" into the allegations, did such inquiries actually take place? If thorough inquiries did not take place, then either Ministers were misled by their advisers into believing that they did, or Ministers knew that such inquiries did not take place and deliberately misinformed the House. On the other hand, if thorough inquiries did take place, one must conclude that either the full facts of the matter were discovered and deliberately withheld by officials from Ministers, who then unwittingly misled Parliament, or Ministers were given the correct facts but deliberately withheld the correct information from the House. It is clear that a number of senior staff who were employed at the MoD when Ministers were giving misleading answers to Parliament had direct personal knowledge of the events in question. Did none of those individuals bring the correct facts to the attention of the Government and, if not, why not?

8.44 pm

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). If any hon. Member deserves to be called tenacious, it is the hon. Gentleman. No one is more fitted to that description and it is important to have the hon. Gentleman on one's side, as I found to my pleasure when he supported me during the passage of my Computer Misuse Bill. I thank him for that support, but, of course, I cannot take up any of the points that he made today in his typical way.

The debate takes place in a new, unexpected and welcome political situation. We are no longer eyeball to eyeball with our potential enemies across the iron curtain. The cold war may not have been very pleasant but at least it was a stable situation and now in a defence sense we are operating in an unstable situation. In these uncertain times, we need stronger and not weaker defences and strong and resolute leadership.

Hon. Members have spoken about the peace dividend. Surely that arises as a result of the strength investment. If we cut that investment too much, we will put at jeopardy the peace dividend. We are operating in a very different defence scenario. The Warsaw pact force is redundant because it is an unworkable organisation. It used to mobilise in two days, but that now takes two months. The whole idea of massive armoured and infantry assaults across Europe is ludicrous. In the Soviet bloc, morale in the armed forces has gone and I understand that draft dodging is as high as 10 per cent.

The peace that we are enjoying is brittle; we should not jump to the conclusion that all is sweetness and light. There are some hard and reactionary men in the Kremlin, and if things go wrong with perestroika they could be back in charge. There is no doubt that, as the Soviet economy collapses, there is a considerable likelihood of Soviet withdrawals from central Europe, although I have no idea what the Soviet Union would do with the millions who would be unemployed as a result of such demobilisation.

The President of the United States is under considerable pressure to deal with his twin deficits of budget and trade, and he will also be tempted to withdraw. If the need then arises to reoccupy central Europe, we should bear in mind what I have described as the two Georgias comparison. To deploy troops from Georgia in the USSR to Berlin takes 15 days but to deploy troops from Georgia in the United States to Berlin takes 90 days and they have to cross the Atlantic ocean. We should consider that when we are talking about withdrawals by either side.

I welcome the Government's review of the defence structure in their options for change. As some hon. Members have said, it is not a full-scale defence review. It is far too early for that, because the situation is too fluid. I support the priorities of the Secretary of State for Defence, among which is the maintenance of a credible nuclear deterrent, because that is our best insurance as it has been for the last 40 years of peace. I also support the adoption of policies that give greater flexibility and mobility.

When he addressed the Select Committee on Defence, the Secretary of State acknowledged that some thinning out of forward forces and great emphasis on rapid reinforcement and flexibility were necessary. He laid particular stress on getting better equipment for more flexible mobile forces in the 1990s and he concluded his evidence to the Select Committee by saying:

"One of the most urgent requirements now is for a new force of battlefield helicopters,".

I should like to speak about helicopters. I echo what my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) said when he drew attention to the undertaking by the then Secretary of State for Defence my right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger) on 9 April three years ago when he announced an order for 25 support utility helicopters, the Anglo-Italian EH101 made by Westland and Augusta. The EH101 comes in two versions—the maritime version and the battlefield version. This being an Army debate, I shall deal with the battlefield version. The Secretary of State, when he made his announcement to the House, acknowledged that, in terms of the numbers deployed in Europe, Britain compares badly with both the French and the Germans, as it does with the Americans. When British troops are being moved about the theatre, we rely heavily on the United States to lift them.

The tactical support helicopter, the EH101, will be able to carry out various missions. It will be able to transport men and materials, and that includes light vehicles carried either internally or externally, to and from and within the battlefield. Artillery pieces can also be underslung. It can act as a mobile command post. It can be used as a platform for electronic warfare or airborne early warning. It is used for logistic purposes with either internal or underslung loads, and it has a self-ferrying capability, its range being 1,115 nautical miles. It is an extremely flexible aircraft and can be powered by a wide variety of Rolls-Royce engines —variations of the RTM 322. The EH101 is available to the British armed forces in four different variations, which shows its design flexibility.

Over the past year, there has been much debate about the pros and cons of the EH101 as a support helicopter

and the Black Hawk. The former has been criticised for being too large to operate successfully in the hostile environment expected in general war in central Europe. However, the rapidly changing situation in that area should cause the detractors of the EH101 to think again. This aircraft has a greater range than the Black Hawk. It can ferry itself to an operational deployment zone. Given the limited manpower ceiling of aircrew and maintenance staff, a force of EH101s will carry three times as many troops as a similar number of Black Hawks. The tasks for the mobile forces are likely to take place in a less hostile environment than those that were expected in central Europe, so the larger and less hardened EH101 should be much more effective than the Black Hawk and better in terms of cost-effectiveness.

For all those reasons, the EH101 is the right choice for the defence forces, but that raises the question of who will fly them. I know that there has been considerable debate as to whether this should be a task for the Royal Air Force or for the Army Air Corps or even for the Royal Corps of Transport, which is equally capable of carrying it out. That debate should be reopened because as we, I hope, start deploying more helicopters, we shall have to boost the strength of the Army Air Corps and run down the role of the RAF. In that task, we want to see them flying British-Italian aircraft rather than American Chinooks.

Several hon. Members have referred to the need for newly defined roles for our Army units. I was interested in what my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer) said about an air mobile division. I am conscious that, with my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) here as well, this debate has been enlivened by the Parachute Regiment lobby. Guardsmen have also been known to hurl themselves out of aircraft on the ends of parachutes. My hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) and I have both indulged in the pastime. Within the air mobile division that has been suggested, there could be a special role for the Foot Guards as part of a rapid deployment corps, perhaps one that is helicopter-borne and specially trained for that purpose.

I hope that there is no thought in the Minister's mind that specialist ceremonial troops should be stationed in London, because that would be a disaster. If troops were stationed in central London, it would be much better to train them for helicopter operations so that they could fly from central London to training zones and back again. This makes a great deal of sense. There is a good case for a territorial unit within the Brigade of Guards, and if there was one, I should join it.

I have said nothing about attack helicopters, which are the subject of another debate. We have the utility Lynx with strapped-on armaments, which is far from satisfactory. We should have a tailormade battlefield helicopter. The urgent requirement is for greater mobility; that is why my hon. Friend the Minister must tell the House when decisions will be made about supplying the Army with the mobility and flexibility that it requires, and would have if more helicopters were ordered. The Government have acknowledged this.

The Secretary of State has already said that he will order 25 utility versions of the EH101. We should like to hear confirmation of that order, and we should like to hear what additional helicopters the Government intend to order so that the Army can fulfil its new operational roles.

8.56 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I apologise to the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates). He kindly gave way to me during his speech. It was remiss of me to intervene, given that, as the Chairman of the Select Committee, he had to make an important contribution to the debate in only 10 minutes.

The hon. and learned Member for Colchester, North (Sir A. Buck) referred to certain military establishments in Colchester. I did my national service in the Royal Military Police and he brought back memories of that establishment and of another, based in Shepton Mallet. However, now is not the time to talk about such institutions.

As a young military policeman based in Germany, not far from the border, I found that even the most riotous Saturday night involving certain Scottish regiments did not face me with anything like the dangers that our young soldiers now face in Ulster and elsewhere. As a Member of Parliament representing the lower Clyde, I have almost a front-line seat on developments in Northern Ireland. Many Scottish soldiers serve with regiments that go across there for tours of duty.

In the days before I entered the House, I always thought that it was a mistake to send Scottish regiments to the Province, because of the intimate historical relationship between the Province and Scotland. The dangers faced by those magnificently brave young men were brought home to me plainly on 9 April this year, when four young men from the Ulster Defence Regiment were so savagely murdered. One was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Bradley of Port Glasgow—Lance-Corporal John Bradley—who, because of that vicious and dastardly attack, has left a young widow in Belfast with two young children, one of whom was only three months old when his father was so brutally murdered. That may explain why I asked about the counselling and welfare provisions offered by the armed forces to the widows of soldiers who have been murdered in such a brutal and cowardly way.

One Bill gives us an opportunity to discuss those welfare provisions for soldiers' families—the Armed Forces Bill. I believe such Bills are a quinquennial event in the house, which last passed an Armed Forces Bill in 1986. Will we be debating an Armed Forces Services Bill early next year? If so, as experienced hon. Members know, a Select Committee will be set up. I had the honour to be on the Select Committee on the Armed Forces in 1986, and I found it useful to cross-examine senior military personnel about the provision of welfare facilities for soldiers.

Let me draw the Minister's attention to the excellent report produced by the Select Committee on Defence: I am concerned about some constituency matters. I refer the Minister to paragraph 74, on page XXV of the report, which refers to

"the completion of certain physical improvements"

to the Royal Ordnance factory at Bishopton. Given that the Ministry of Defence police have been pulled out of Bishopton and that there is to be a civilian defence force, is the Minister satisfied with the recent developments at Royal Ordnance Bishopton? The chief constable of the Strathclyde police has said that he could provide a quick armed response if Bishopton was attacked in any way.

In paragraphs 74 and 75, the Select Committee said that it shared the anxiety of local people and others, including

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the Defence Police Federation spokesman, about standards of security at RO Bishopton. In paragraph 75, the Select Committee report said:

"there is still some anxiety, which we share, about an apparent lowering of the standards of security arrangements for guarding a site where ready-to-use explosives are stored,."

We are told by various pundits in the media that the IRA has a large store of Semtex. A goodly number of my constituents are employed at RO Bishopton.

In the absence of my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham), I feel that it is right and proper for me to demand an assurance from the Minister that the changeover at the Royal Ordnance factory from a Ministry of Defence police to a civilian guard will not in any way infringe the security of our constituents who work there, or the security of the communities in and around that plant. Paragraph 75 recommends that the number and quality of the forces deployed at Bishopton must be closely monitored. Which institutions will monitor the guarding of that plant?

Mr. Mates: The Ministry of Defence.

Dr. Godman: The hon. Gentleman has answered the question, but for the public record I should still like an answer from the Minister. Will it be the Ministry of Defence, will it be the Strathclyde police or will they work in tandem? What form will the monitoring take? Of course, there may be security reasons that prevent the Minister from providing answers. However, on behalf of my constituents employed at Bishopton and the communities in Renfrewshire, I seek an assurance that the Minister is confident that there will not be a lowering of the quality of the guard provided at that plant. Those are important considerations for the people of Renfrewshire, and I look forward to the Minister's response.

9.6 pm

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): I shall curtail my speech in the hope that other hon. Members may have an opportunity to contribute, even at this late hour.

I must tell my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench that I very much endorse the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates) about the effect of the community charge on the regular forces. There are some anomalies that could be easily addressed without great cost to the public.

My hon. Friend the Minister listed some of the victims of the IRA this year, not only civilians, but members of the armed forces. They were mostly soft targets, which we know is the cowardly way in which the IRA operates. Perhaps we expect little else of it. However, I hope that, especially on the mainland, we expect slightly more of some of our television producers. Should anyone be listening, I say to Yorkshire Television that its recent actions have given a great deal of encouragement to the forces of terrorism. Would that those television producers, either BBC or ITV, gave as much attention to the impact of terrorism on those widowed and left fatherless as they do to the terrorists. That would be a different story.

The review is taking place against the background of great changes, and that has been commented on by hon. Members from both sides of the House. It was a little churlish of the Opposition, especially the hon. Members for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) and for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), to be so sarcastic about the role of the Government's policies in the events that have so radically changed the map of Europe.

I believe that, once the bosses of the Kremlin realised that NATO forces, especially in the United Kingdom, would not roll over quietly, that brought about the great changes that Mr. Gorbachev managed to instigate. I have not the slightest doubt that military history will show that the decision to deploy cruise—with considerable objection from the Opposition—against the deployment of SS20s by the Soviet Union was fundamental in bringing about that realisation.

I am not sure about the purpose of these debates, other than perhaps to fire the odd warning shot across the bows of departmental Ministers. In that sense, there have been many warnings during the debate that any decision to cut dramatically what press reports suggest may be as much as 40 per cent. of our infantry battalions will not go without challenge in the Conservative party. I am sure that my colleagues will not present us with any ultimatum or fast plan and that there will be considerable consultation about any movement.

We must realise the need for an army in Britain, and the debate must be about its size and the location of its units. Military presence and, indeed, military experience is good for the nation. Units with widespread community and civic life play a good part on behalf of the Regular Army. My criticism of past policies has been the determination to centralise so much of military training and take the armed forces away from the community.

I regularly plug the Territorial Army hobby horse, and it has been encouraging in this debate to see how many colleagues have mentioned the need for increased Territorial Army activity. Taking up 3·5 per cent. of the Army's budget as it does, it clearly does not require a huge expenditure, but the Government receive a great deal in return and so does the Territorial Army. Not only do those taking part have the opportunity for personal development and to acquire team skills; they also have the challenge of physical activity and a variety of training, particularly the use of helicopters and other things which, in civilian life, would not be open to them. What saddens me is that adventure training is still not classified and officially sanctioned, so it is difficult to organise. Future training for the Territorial Army and the Regular Army may have to concentrate on personal skills and challenges.

I hope to see a great expansion of the Territorial Army. I still believe that the Swiss conscription period of 14 days per annum is an ideal way of giving the general young population an experience of military life. The hon. Member for Rhondda rather mocked the idea of people having experience of military service, but young people aged between 16 and 24 in Britain are not yet ready for middle age, mortgage and children, and God help the nation if they are. An experience of military life would do them the world of good and would be greatly welcomed.

The Army epitomises loyalty, comradeship and effectiveness, and I hope that our Government will not throw that away.

9.11 pm

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): On the Saturday evening of the last bank holiday weekend, there was an intrusion by the Army into my constituency which was

unwelcome, unexpected and frightening. The Rogerstone power station, which has closed down, was attacked in what is believed to have been an Army exercise. There was no warning to the police, who were confused by what was going on, and there was no warning to the Member of Parliament. It was frightening because helicopters were used, with searchlights coming down from the sky illuminating a wide area. Thunderflashes were used and there was the sound of machine-gun fire. At least one claim is coming in for a car which was damaged by a thunderflash that went astray.

As there was no warning in the area, when complaints were made and inquiries were made of me and the police, nobody could provide an answer. However, there appears to have been some information at police headquarters which was not available in Newport. As one would expect, rumours spread that there was an IRA attack and, most persistently and widespread, that there was a gunman on the loose, as has happened, sadly, in many other places. The people of Newport are sensible and they realise that the special services have to exercise and in circumstances that are as realistic as possible, but the question remains whether that was wise.

May we have some assurance from the Minister that, since every exercise is artificial to some degree, it would not noticeably affect the value of the exercise if full warnings were given to the local population? Will he also tell us that never again will there be the combination of hazards that took place at Rogerstone that night, where helicopters were left hovering for prolonged periods between two hills at night at low altitude?

I have been in contact with the Minister's office and there is an apologetic tone coming from there. I understand that the Minister has been abroad and has not managed to respond fully so far. But the people of Newport are considerably angered that the exercise took place under such deplorable circumstances and we look for assurances that there will be no repetition in Gwent or elsewhere.

9.14 pm

Sir Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): I am sorry to hear of the events described by the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn). I am sure that adequate warnings will be given in future.

I endorse fully my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's views expressed on page 5 and all that goes with that. I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister of State who endorsed my right hon. Friend's policy. We sat back as NATO and the Warsaw pact faced one another, and thought that everything was all right—but suddenly things changed. The Warsaw pact is disintegrating, and we are left with NATO. It is important that we should build and strengthen it, because we never know what will happen, and adjust our forces with that in mind. However, we cannot do so immediately, because we do not know how far Gorbachev's changes will go. Nor do we know what precisely will be the outcome of his recent talks in America.

We are left with a situation that is so fluid that it is almost more dangerous than when NATO and the Warsaw pact were facing one another. Anything might happen at any time. I am sure that all right hon. and hon. Members recognise that the situation today is not more secure but more uncertain—but given strength of will, we shall succeed.

The Bush negotiations were welcome, but difficult, because they changed the composition of nuclear forces. Again, we shall have to plan for the consequences. We need a highly mobile force, making use—as my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West said—of helicopters, and to adopt a completely new attitude to our forces in Europe. I was particularly glad that the Minister of State paid tribute to the British Army, the Ulster Defence Regiment and the Royal Ulster Constabulary, as they render marvellous service in the most difficult circumstances.

One of the most important issues we must confront is that of the Territorial Army, which may not have the strength currently that was once anticipated. It is important to recruit more men and women into the TA, which takes on even greater importance if there are to be cuts elsewhere. In an emergency, members of the Territorial Army and reserves can always be called up.

It is important that TA members should be accorded proper treatment, be respected by members of the Regular Army and become almost a part of it. Employers should, where possible, be compelled to allow their staff to take leave for the purpose of giving TA service. I understand that 820 employers currently co-operate, but they are mainly large firms. More should be trained, to serve side by side with the Regular Army. They should also be given proper equipment. As my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) said, an incentive should be provided to join the TA. If there is a problem of recruitment, I am sure that it can be overcome.

We must bear in mind always the fact that the scene can still alter. Gorbachev could fall and there could be changes in the Soviet Government. Our nuclear deterrent remains absolutely essential and must be retained not only to ensure peace in Europe but to serve as a deterrent against countries that are themselves developing nuclear weapons. We must retain our nuclear deterrent, whether we like it or not.

Whatever happens, it is the duty of this Government, and of any future Government, to ensure that the defence of this country is adequate and sufficient.

9.21 pm

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): I am most grateful to the Front-Bench spokesmen for reducing their time and I shall allow a couple of minutes for the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall).

The changes that have taken place in eastern Europe have been referred to again and again. I remind the House of the old adage that military planners must base their calculations not on intentions but on capabilities. The dissolution of the Soviet Union's allies in the Warsaw pact, while considerably affecting ground forces in Europe and changing warning times from days to weeks, has had no significant effect on nuclear forces and precious little on naval and air forces. A tremendous imbalance still exists between the Soviet Union as a single power and the combined forces of NATO.

For that reason, even if President Gorbachev's position were unassailable, if there were no political unrest in the Soviet Union, and if we were convinced that perestroika is absolutely set fair, we should still be cautious. I know that

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there are enthusiasts for defence roles for the European Community and the Western European Union in the House, as we hear them mentioned from time to time, but it is important that we remember that the only structure which offers the co-ordinated political framework, intelligence framework and command structure necessary for deterrence is still NATO.

I find it worrying that last weekend President Gorbachev was unable to endorse President Bush's simple statement that membership of NATO by a combined Germany should be a matter for the Germans. It is worrying that President Gorbachev should find it necessary to say that if Germany chose to stay in NATO it could have a profound effect on the progress of conventional arms reduction talks and, by implication, on the Soviet Union's willingness to withdraw from East Germany. I do not speak critically of President Gorbachev; it is a sad reflection on the continuing reality of power in the Soviet Union that it is not possible for the present leader to dismantle the Soviet military structure and posture as quickly as he might like.

Other hon. Members have referred to potential problems in the third world and I shall not reiterate what they said, except the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith)—that if we should ever become involved in one of the many trouble spots in the third world, where vital western interests as well as world peace could be threatened, we have to remember that those countries, to a large extent, have both heavy and sophisticated weapons. The idea that a handful of small lightly-armed forces can whiz off and sort them out simply belongs to 30 years ago.

Our Regular Army has a profoundly different structure from armies in the rest of the major countries in European NATO because it is an all-volunteer Army. Even Labour Front-Bench spokesmen have conceded that that makes it difficult to compare our spending patterns to those in the other NATO countries, where there is an enormous contribution in kind by using conscript soldiers, whereas we have to offer competitive rates of pay. For that reason we already have by far the smallest Army of any major European NATO country.

I read in this morning's *Daily Telegraph* that we may be contemplating substantially reducing numbers of troops —by as much as 40 per cent. Quite apart from the overall wisdom of that, and I would certainly be cautious about making cuts of that size, even if there were a successful outcome to the Vienna talks—which seems to be in question at the moment—we must recognise that it would still be an expensive Army, because we have chosen to go down the volunteer and professional route. That has paid off in a number of ways, not least of which is the conduct of our soldiers in Ulster, which is something that none of our European allies could have matched.

We have gone down an expensive route, and it is no good trying to persuade ourselves that we can get our armed forces on the cheap while our regular forces are all professional. My second point about the Regular Army is that the concomitant of that and the reason why it is expensive is that, if one wants to continue to retain and attract young men and women of calibre into those professional forces, one has to be willing to offer them a standard of living comparable to that in civilian life. We have done well on the salary side and I am not critical of the level of salaries in the armed forces. However, I must be critical of some of the fringe areas, which are important and I will concentrate on three in particular.

I have frequently mentioned house purchase. I will quote one paragraph from the continuous attitude survey of high fliers at the junior division of the staff college. The paragraph says:

"The area causing by far the greatest degree of dissatisfaction, however, was assistance with house purchase, where some 84·9 per cent. of respondents expressed some dissatisfaction, with 58·8 per cent. reporting they were 'very' dissatisfied."

Secondly, I do not have time to go into the complexity of the question of wives' careers. We have improved the number of wives with jobs in the Army, but they are overwhelmingly low-grade jobs. I suggest to Ministers that there is a cheap solution to that—by setting up integrated business centres with decent telecommunications facilities in our major bases in which wives with professions could rent spaces. There is already an organisation in my constituency which very effectively runs a complete City money-broking operation from a village 70 miles from the City.

Thirdly, education is also a complicated subject in an organisation in which families are moving all the time. It is unfair that tax is charged on boarding school allowances for those who send their children to boarding school to give them a continuous education. The standards in service schools are also starting to slip badly behind their civilian counterparts.

We must be careful about NMS—the new management strategy. It is yielding dividends in the civilian area and in some of the support areas, but in applying it to operational units, we must never forget that the task of a fighting unit is to prepare for war. That can never be fully encapsulated in the objectives that one produces in management strategies in civilian life. It is important that we do not become so carried away in trying to achieve accountability down the line that we convert leadership into bureaucracy.

I am proud to be a serving officer in the Home Service Force unit of the Territorial Army, which is affiliated to 10 Para. However, we must be cautious in what we can expect from the Territorial Army. There are many excellent units in the Territorial Army and I like to think that I belong to one of them. However, the bulk of the Territorial Army suffers from the same problem that Churchill's diaries identified in 1940. It is seriously short of adequate grade officers and non-commissioned officers.

That problem brings about the secondary problem—that there is too much turnover in the lower ranks because they become bored where there is a lack of leadership. The problem is best tackled through the effective employers' initiative which the Government have started. My own unit, 10 Para, sponsored Exercise Executive Stretch two weeks ago. We will reverse the trend by convincing employers that the Territorial Army is a worthwhile enterprise and not by pouring money into pay and allowances.

We must be realistic about the Territorial Army. It is a splendid organisation with an important role to play. I endorse the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer) on a better role for airborne forces in the Territorial Army, because airborne units tend to be well recruited. However, we must remember that there is a limit to how much we can use the territorial

forces. The Israelis discovered to their cost that one cannot keep mobilising civilian reserve forces in the face of an enemy mobilisation. Eventually, pressure from employers will force a Territorial Army to demobilise. I stress again that this is not the time to be lowering our guard.

9.28 pm

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity for a two-minute peroration. I shall concentrate solely on the report on the physical security of military installations by the Select Committee on Defence. We undertook the report as a result of events at Mill Hill and Deal. We said in the report that, with the passage of time, the threat has not been reduced. That is even more relevant today than when we commenced our report.

The Minister mentioned Deal in his opening remarks and made one or two comments that are not on public record at present. My information is that the report on Deal went to the Secretary of State for Defence on 8 December 1989. That report has been lying on the desk of the Secretary of State for Defence for more than six months. When are we going to get the report and when can we discuss it? The report must be produced quickly. I should like the Minister to refer to that matter.

The Select Committee examined many aspects of security. We concluded that the buck stops at the Ministry of Defence and on the Secretary of State's desk. During a public examination, a question about policy was put to a senior Ministry of Defence official. We were informed that it was ministerial policy to introduce privatisation and contracting. When he was pressed on that point, the senior civil servant said that Ministers who are told by officials that their policies are not working very well are inclined to doubt the enthusiasm of the officials for the policy. In other words, the messenger is shot.

Our enthusiasm is doubted because the policy is not working and because it is based on cost cutting. A policy that is based on saving money endangers lives. With private security firms, the usual vetting procedures and scrutiny are not available. Ministers must answer that. The buck stops with Ministers. Let the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement answer why, in the face of advice, he is going ahead with cost cutting and providing a lower level of security than before. Cost cutting endangers lives. That is the most poignant message in the report by the Select Committee on Defence.

9.30 pm

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): This debate is extremely important, for it may be the only chance to have a public airing of major questions about the future of the Army before the Secretary of State puts his signature at the bottom of the secret review of defence policy that has been going on in Whitehall for some months now.

Last week, in an extraordinary interview on the BBC "Today" programme with the Minister of State for Defence Procurement, we heard how the options being considered in the defence review were "very, very secret" so there could be no public debate until Defence Ministers had decided what the options were. That is a contemptuous attitude. The changes that are under way in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union have overwhelming implications for British foreign and defence policy. Ultimately, they may call into question the purpose and utility of military force itself, at least in Europe, and they certainly presage some major changes in the relationship between the state, the armed forces and civil society.

In the circumstances, the British public deserve a great deal more than the usual treatment that they get from the Government—a few leaked documents from Ministers or civil servants who know that they will not get their own way in the end because they must ultimately face the steamroller from No. 10, followed by a fait accompli decision about any opportunity for real debate.

I can hear Ministers say that this is a free country and that people can and do say what they like about the future of Britain's defence policy in the newspapers, on television and so on. But any such debate will take place in a complete vacuum if we are not even permitted to know what the agenda is inside Government. If the Government insist on maintaining their ridiculous secrecy, they are effectively saying to the public that defence is not a matter for them.

That may be all very well in a climate in which public support for defence spending can be relied on, but with more and more people questioning the need for large military forces and expensive equipment, a policy of closing off debate will simply reinforce the public belief that the military is an anachronism and that secrecy is merely a ploy to protect overblown budgets and pet projects from cuts. The result will be a further decline in the military's legitimacy in the eyes of taxpayers. The public will simply see no need for military spending and will not vote for it.

Opposition Members have always expressed the view that defence reviews should be open and honest. My right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), who conducted such an open defence review in the 1960s, knows only too well that the price of openness can be stinging public criticism from those who have interests to defend, but that is the nature of debate and the Government should not be afraid to face it.

I wish to ask the Minister a few questions, which I realise that he might not answer this evening, so I am prepared to accept his replies in writing. How much is the review costing? Has the Foreign and Commonwealth Office been involved? Have the three service chiefs been involved? Have NATO partners been consulted? What considerations have been given to the industrial and economic consequences of the review, especially in terms of jobs? What are the spending priorities for any cash that is saved, as suggested by the Minister of State for Defence Procurement?

In any review of defence policy, the growing build-up of non-nuclear, but highly provocative and deadly, weapons systems in the third world must be considered. The proliferation of advanced weapons systems is of great concern. They include ballistic and chemical weapons, and the use of cluster bombs, launched from a 20-mile-range missile, causing damage over a 40-acre area. The advanced countries either sell those weapons directly or sell the technology.

One cannot really talk about military policy in the third world without considering chemical weapons. While a generation of British soldiers have been trained on how to fight on a chemically contaminated battlefield in central Europe, the real threat from chemical weapons is in the third world. No one can deny that chemical weapons proliferation is a problem, having seen the awful scenes of

[Mr. Roland Boyes]

the Iran-Iraq war. It now seems that the brief phase of chemical rearmament of the mid-1980s may be over. Opposition Members wholeheartedly welcome the agreement that was reached last week between the Soviet Union and the United States of America, which will lead to the Americans joining the Soviets in stopping chemical weapons production, and to the cutting of the stockpiles to 20 per cent. of the current United States levels. However, we are disappointed that the Americans have thought it necessary to retain substantial, newly modernised chemical weapons, as that will be a major disincentive to other possessor countries to give up their stocks during the global chemical weapons convention.

There is great concern that some biological and chemical weapons are not quite right. We have reached a stage of genetic engineering of chemical weapons and can make tailormade bugs at the same time as providing vaccines for our own troops.

Britain could be in a strong positon to argue the case. If the Americans and now the Soviets want to keep chemical weapons on the ground that they are a deterrent against, say, the Libyas, the Irans and the Iraqs of the world, they are subscribing to the hoary old myth of like-for-like deterrence.

Back in 1983, when a debate was going on within the Ministry of Defence about whether Britain should consider restarting chemical weapons production, the then Secretary of State for Defence, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) was quoted as saying that NATO doctrine rested on the belief that the west's conventional and nuclear weapons were a sufficient deterrent against chemical attack, and that NATO consequently did not need its own chemical stocks.

That argument now goes even further. Since Germany will never accept chemical weapons on its soil after the current United States stocks are removed, the new United States binary weapons can hardly be regarded as a credible deterrent against the Soviet Union. Since United States policy has specifically referred to other chemical weapons possessor countries, does that mean that the USA is prepared to use chemical weapons against countries such as Libya?

Are chemical weapons really a deterrent? The United States' possession of chemical weapons and the presence in the Gulf of aircraft carriers capable of launching airborne chemical attacks did not stop either Iran or Iraq from using poison gas on each other. The fact is that there are no conceivable circumstances in which the USA could or would drop chemical or biological gas on people in the third world without creating a storm of negative if not hostile reaction.

The truth is that super-power chemical stocks have no military utility. Any threat to use them is empty. Britain should therefore argue strongly for the USA and Soviet Union—and, indeed, France—to abandon all their stocks at the earliest possible date as part of a global ban, reached through the chemical disarmament talks.

I accept that there are severe problems in getting the mavericks—Hussein, Gaddafi and so on—to join a global ban. That will be one of the foremost tasks of those negotiating the chemical weapons convention. One thing is certain. As long as the United States, the Soviets and the French keep their chemical weapons, there will be no incentive for anyone else to give them up.

Britain should go back to its long-held position, established when we abandoned our offensive capability in the 1950s. That is that one does not need chemical weapons to deter a chemical attack. The Government have stressed for some years that the Soviet Union has a massive chemical stockpile. On several occasions they stated publicly that they believed that the Soviet Union's stockpile was about six times greater than the 50,000 tonnes now claimed. Although this year's defence estimates are rather more coy about the figures, they restate that position and say that the Government believe that the Soviet stockpile

"exceeds that claimed in their public statements."

Only the week before the 1990 defence estimates were published, the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces said in another place:

"our current estimate of the stock of chemical weapons in Russia is about 50,000 tonnes."

After all the accusations of lying and cheating, the Government now believe the Soviets' own figures. Moreover, the Minister went on to say:

"we are not aware of any recent significant changes in the Soviet Union's chemical warfare capability."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 29 March 1990; Vol. 517, c. 963-4.]

I hope that the Minister can confirm that that is indeed the Government's new position and will explain why his intelligence has suddenly cut the estimate to one sixth of the previous estimate.

I intended to speak about NATO and the Warsaw treaty. The hon. Member for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer), who is not in his place, said that the Warsaw treaty organisation barely exists. That provides an opportunity for a transition to forms of international politics in Europe that are not predicated on the ever-present threat of unleashing mass destruction. As long as we feel that we cannot trust each other, our attempts to solve serious political problems will always be based on threats of violence. If the institutions that we use to seek solutions are themselves founded on the concept of political coercion by threatening violence, we shall have narrowed the options from the start.

Perhaps NATO has a transitional role and will help to shape new ideas for the security of Europe. But as Sir Michael Howard said in a lecture at King's college in March:

"There is a need for thinking as bold and innovative as that called for 40 years ago if NATO is not to be seen as a dinosaur, an obstacle to rather than an instrument for the remaking of Europe."

That bold new thinking must take account, initially at least, of the established co-operation of the CSCE process. That offers us a proven working forum that has some potential to move beyond bloc-to-bloc relations. It also has the advantage that it can deal effectively with military questions as well as economic, cultural and political issues.

There is now an opportunity for discussions about how the CSCE process could be used to develop a new European security order. It does not follow that that involves the immediate dismantling of NATO. As Manfred Wörner said on television today, NATO could be one of the props in the CSCE process. There are risks as well as opportunities in the CSCE process. However, the climate is being created in which those matters can be considered seriously. We are approaching a time when east

and west must mutually consider the role of the military in Europe beyond non-provocative defence. Out of CFE we must build up confidence on both sides through verification processes by an agreed inspectorate, which would lead to exchanges of information.

Whatever the reality or, indeed, the perception of the Soviet threat, we cannot escape the fact that the CFE treaty and political trends in Germany—whether it is unified or not—could mean a major cut in the British Army of the Rhine. Of course, that will be a major topic of discussion in the two-plus-four talks.

In common with Conservative Members, we pay tribute to the skill, professionalism and dedication of our armed personnel in all ranks, many of whom are often at risk. Unfortunately at this time those at risk regrettably include their wives and children. Not only the politicians, but the Army must recognise the significance of the change in the nature of the threat. Inevitably that will lead to a slimmed-down Army. The Army must still be provided, however, with the most up-to-date equipment and the trained personnel to carry out efficiently and effectively whatever task it is asked to undertake by the nation.

9.44 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Michael Neubert): In opening the debate, my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces gave a positive message. The dramatic changes in the Soviet Union and eastern Europe have profound and complex implications for European security. Their full import is not yet clear, nor will it be for some time ahead. What is clear is that there is much to be resolved and negotiated. Our primary aim is, as it always has been, to maintain our security. We hope that the changes in Europe mean that we can achieve this aim at lower force levels and at reduced cost.

This changing scene naturally raises much speculation and uncertainty about the future role and structure of the three services. That uncertainty is, of course, felt within the services and, as the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) observed, especially by the Army. The House knows that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is currently examining the options for the United Kingdom's defence policy for the 1990s and the next century, and the structures that would be needed to support them. Hon. Members would not expect me to comment on those considerations tonight. It follows from that that it would be premature for me to speculate on how the Army itself may change, but, whatever happens, we will still need the Army's traditional strengths of versatility and flexibility.

The House will be grateful to all those hon. Members who have taken part in the debate. So numerous were they that the majority of speeches had to be time-limited, including the concluding speeches from the Front Benches. I shall endeavour, of course, to attempt to address some of the many points that have been raised today and to ensure that others are answered in writing. I also hope to say something myself if time allows.

As usual, the debate has benefited from Members' experience and expertise. It was welcome to hear the comments of the hon. Members for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) and for Gower (Mr. Wardell) about their experience of the armed forces parliamentary scheme. That is one contribution to a greater understanding of the part the services play in the defence of our nation.

The first issue that I want to address was raised by the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) who opened the debate for the Opposition. To be the Opposition spokesman on defence deserves some small compensations or it would be a thankless task in the extreme. He mentioned what the Defence Committee report said about commercial security guards. At Deal, Reliance did not employ any personnel with criminal records. All commercial guards are vetted by the Ministry of Defence. The competence of Reliance was not in question and it was supported by armed Royal Marines guards.

The individual with the alleged 500 criminal convictions was taken on by Reliance, but was not employed by it as he quit when he realised that his record was under investigation by the company. He was never part of the Deal complement. Commercial guards are not used solely to guard military installations where service men work and sleep—they are used to augment the Ministry of Defence police and service guards who may be armed.

Mr. Rogers *rose*——

Mr. Neubert: Before the hon. Gentleman rises to intervene on this subject again, I counsel him to observe the advice of the Select Committee on Defence—that one should not prejudge the lessons to be learnt from the incident at Deal without knowing the full facts.

Mr. Rogers: I do not want to prejudge anything in relation to Deal, but it is important to be clear about who was employed by Reliance Security Services. As I understand from the evidence given to the Select Committee, the man with 500 convictions was recommended to the job by a man with whom he served in prison, who was working with Reliance and told him that he should join the company. The Minister should check that, as his information may be wrong. The man may not have been employed at Deal, but he was certainly employed as a commercial security guard by the MOD.

Mr. Neubert: The hon. Member is incorrigible and I shall not attempt to instruct him further on that point.

The hon. Gentleman also raised the question of service accommodation. Again, the figure that he quoted is not recognised by my officials and we shall have to look into the matter further to identify which figure he wants updated. I assure him that there is a substantial programme of works to upgrade married quarters and single accommodation in our older property, and new building produces some very desirable residences indeed.

The hon. Gentleman quoted from a book, apparently published last September, which was critical of today's Army. He was careful not to endorse the criticisms, but he gave them wide publicity by including them in his speech. Included among the phrases he quoted was the term "ruthless careerism." I cannot see how that could be applied so much to the Army as to the occupants of the Labour Front Bench, who are prepared to deny their deepest, innermost socialist convictions in public in a futile attempt to persuade the British public to vote Labour at the next general election. They will fail.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates), the incorrigible hon. Member for Rhondda and others mentioned the Defence Committee's sixth report.

[Mr. Neubert]

As my hon. Friend the Minister of State said, we welcome the report and will be responding in the usual way. I will not prejudge that response now, but, on the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Hampshire, East about Ministry of Defence police at Royal Ordnance factories, I can say that we are having discussions with British Aerospace and other interested parties, and we hope to reach a satisfactory outcome.

On the point about Bishopton raised by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), I can report that the Ministry of Defence police force at the site will be withdrawn during this month. It is being replaced by Royal Ordnance plc guard force personnel, who are being trained by personnel from Strathclyde police force. The chief constable of Strathclyde is satisfied with those arrangements, entered into in consultation with the Ministry of Defence and the company. His police force will supply the armed response if required.

Crucial to the effectiveness and efficiency of the services are their men and women, both in terms of their quality and quantity——

Mr. Dalyell *rose——*

Mr. Neubert: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not give way. I have little time left.

It is on personal issues in the main that I intend to focus in my speech. The interests of service personnel are close to the hearts of many hon. Members.

Mr. Dalyell *rose——*

Hon. Member: Sit down.

Mr. Neubert: I really must get on.

Mr. Dalyell: The Minister is supposed to be answering the debate.

Mr. Neubert: If the hon. Gentleman will permit me, I will answer the debate. Only a few minutes remain. I have much to say, without the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) raising further questions. He spent the whole of his 10 minutes asking a series of questions, and he should be satisfied with that.

We seek to offer an attractive opportunity for a worthwhile career for both officers and soldiers——

Mr. Dalyell *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Minister is clearly not giving way.

Mr. Neubert: We seek to offer an attractive opportunity for a worthwhile career for officers and soldiers which provides plenty of challenge and job satisfaction and is well supported and properly rewarded in financial terms. Only in that way will we persuade the right calibre of people to commit themselves to a career in the Army.

As the House is aware, we have for some time been increasingly concerned by an inability to recruit and retain sufficient numbers of young people in the services, especially in the Army, which is by far the most manpower-intensive. The key points that influence us are, first, that manpower is our most precious asset—slightly more than half the Army's total budget is spent on pay and manpower-related matters—and secondly, that our serving men and women are expensively trained and skilled in a world in which skill shortages are increasing. They are also well disciplined and well motivated. They are, in consequence, highly attractive to outside employers.

Future requirements will be influenced by decisions about the shape and size of the Army. In that Army, air mobility may well have an important part to play. I cannot respond to the points made by my hon. Friends, but I can confirm that the House of Commons air mobile brigade is well staffed by my hon. Friends the Members for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer), for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin), for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) and for Windsor and Maidenhead (Sir A. Glyn), and there may be others. But whatever the eventual outcome, it is clear that recruiting will become that much more difficult with the onset of the demographic trough.

As the House is well aware, the fall in the number of young people has already begun and will continue for some years. The resulting competition from other employers for that falling number of potential employees is making it ever more difficult to recruit and retain all the men and women for the Army that we would like. The Army succeeded in recruiting just over 22,000 officers and soldiers last year—a record achievement, reflecting the sterling effort put into the work. Nevertheless, it was about 5,000 under the trained strength requirement at 31 March this year.

In contrast with that success on the recruitment front, outflow remains far higher than we would like and led to an increase in the Army's undermanning. About 25,000 people left the Army last year. We propose to introduce a wide-ranging strategy to improve manning. Retaining expensively trained manpower is essential, and the principle of maintaining comparability of pay plays a vital part in this. Once again, the Government have accepted the recommendations of the Armed Forces Pay Review Body, giving the armed forces an average increase in pay of 9·4 per cent. with three quarters of the award coming from 1 April last and the remainder from 1 January next year. We have also accepted the review body's recommendation that the service X factor should rise by 0·5 per cent. to compensate for the special difficulties of life in the services. The full increase in the pay bill this year is 10·9 per cent.

We are directing our spending particularly towards improving the retention of trained Army personnel. With effect from January next year, committal bonuses are being introduced for both officers and soldiers. Officers will be paid a bonus of £6,500 on promotion to captain and a further bonus of £6,500 on promotion to major. Payment will be made on completing six years service for captains and nine years for majors. In return, those accepting bonuses will be expected to complete at least three further years service. For soldiers, those completing five or eight years service on or after January 1991 will be paid a bonus of £2,000 subject to a commitment to serve for at least a further 12 months. New entrants will join after 1 January next year on new terms of engagement, and will be eligible for bonuses after five and eight years service.

I was sorry to miss the speech by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Sir A. Buck) and to hear about his experience at the military correction training centre. I shall read it with pleasure in *Hansard* tomorrow.

I should like to respond to the request by my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) by confirming that we have proposals for the formation of an Adjutant-General's Corps. Further work is under way to give effect to the decision already announced and to establish which existing corps functions should be included in the new corps. We are considering the Royal Army Chaplain's department, the corps of the Royal Military Police, the Royal Army Pay Corps, the Military Provost Staff Corps, the Royal Army Education Corps and the Army Legal Corps. In addition, the staff clerk functions currently carried out by the Royal Army Ordnance Corps and the Women's Royal Army Corps will be considered for inclusion in the new corps. About 6,500 uniformed personnel are involved. It is obviously too early for me to be able to report to the House on the precise size and composition of the new corps, but I hope that the necessary work can be completed and decisions taken by the end of the year.

Several of my hon. Friends warmly commended the Territorial Army. I confirm that the contribution made by the Territorial Army to our defence capability is substantial. Over 76,000 TA volunteers, including members of the Home Service Force, form an integral part of our mobilised order of battle. Beyond that, about 180,000 ex-Regular reservists form a vital pool from which TA and Regular Army units can be reinforced, and are a valuable source of military expertise.

I was interested in the point, made by my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Sir G. Johnson Smith), which was reinforced by my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham about mixed units of Regulars and reservists. That will be considered. As I have said, Regular Army units can be reinforced. Like the rest of the armed forces, the TA has suffered from manning problems, especially retention, but we have seen a most positive response to our volunteer reserve forces campaign. That was aimed at securing a wider public understanding of the volunteer reserves, with over 800 major firms pledging support. Employers understand the benefits that their own organisations can reap from supporting their employees joining the TA, a point made by the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis).

Membership of the TA not only trains a man or woman to be a good soldier but develops qualities such as leadership, responsibility, discipline and self-confidence, which are just as valuable in the commercial world. For the future, I am confident that the TA is in good shape and well poised to meet the changes likely to take place in the years ahead. There is no question but that it will continue to play a vital role in the future and will prove able to meet the challenging operational and technical requirements of the years to come.

The changing international climate presents great challenges and holds out prospects of great promise. Some uncertainty is inescapable, but in the meantime, the Army's contribution to maintaining stability and security for the nation is vital. We can be confident that the Army will be equal to the task.

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Miss Carol Dempster

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Fallon.]*

10 pm

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): I rise to put a constituency case, that of Miss Carol Dempster, aged 25, who was involved in a traffic accident in October 1988. This accident was first with a black Sierra travelling in the opposite direction from her and then with a police car. Despite the circumstances of the accident and the seriousness with which I and people in the Home Office view this, the Metropolitan police refuse to pay her compensation.

Carol Dempster was travelling along Barnet lane near my constituency in the direction of the A1 on a Friday evening at approximately 9.30 at night. A black Ford Sierra came round the bend travelling at high speed. She said that she knew that he would hit her so she pulled the car into the left hand side of the road, turning the bonnet into the kerb. The black Sierra hit her car on the side of the front wing and the door and then carried on up the road. By this time, as far as she knew, Miss Dempster was stationary or moving only slowly.

Just after that, a police Rover came round the bend travelling at high speed. There is some question whether it was doing 70 or 90 mph, but both are high speeds. The car then hit the rear wing and wheels of her car, doing extensive damage. Miss Dempster's car may have been slightly over the white line or just touching it, but it could not have been far over, as the boot of a Triumph Spitfire is quite small.

The response of the police after this accident comes into several categories. First, when Miss Dempster was wandering around dazed and injured—luckily, only slightly—she received no help from police who were around at the time. To be fair, the police have since apologised for that. When Miss Dempster sought compensation from the police, she met with a shocking response. In a letter from the claims officer of the Metropolitan police claims branch to her solicitor on 22 February 1989, Mr. J. M. Comer said:

> "Your client took evasive action but, unfortunately, ran into the oncoming police vehicle causing injury to the occupants of both vehicles."

That statement cannot possibly be true and should never have been made by an official of the Metropolitan police.

After the representations that I made to the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, to the receiver and to the Home Office, the Home Office wrote to the receiver suggesting that compensation be paid to Miss Dempster. The letter said:

> "The Lord Ferris would be grateful, however, if you could review the decision in this case in the light of the points which were made by Mr. Hughes and if you would consider the possibility of making some payment to Miss Dempster in order to compensate her for the loss which she sustained through no fault of her own."

That has been met with a blanket "no" from the receiver of the Metropolitan police.

Why do I raise this case, as distinct from the three years of cases that I—like other hon. Members—have encountered in my constituency advice bureaux? It is not just because of the seriousness of the loss that Carol

[Mr. Robert G. Hughes]

Dempster has suffered, but because I believe that it is an indicator of a wider problem. High-speed police chases are controversial, both nationally and locally in Harrow.

I attended a meeting of the police consultative committee in Harrow, where the topic was discussed over a long period. Many people took the view that the police should not be allowed to travel at high speed to chase criminals. I did not share that view; I took the view then —as I do now—that if the police, for operational reasons known only to themselves, believe that they should chase someone at high speed—although we know the practice to be dangerous—they should retain the right to do so. What is more, they should have the support of hon. Members in carrying out that difficult work.

The police need our support, but until the case was brought to my attention I believed—as, I think, would other hon. Members—that in the event of an accident in which property was damaged or an individual was unfortunately hurt, the police would take a generous attitude in compensating the person, recognising that they needed to carry out their work. My concern is not just for the unfortunate plight of my constituent, Carol Dempster, but for the wider issue of support for the Metropolitan police.

The attitude taken by the receiver of the Metropolitan police does no favours to the policeman on the beat, or to policemen who have been—or will be—engaged in high-speed pursuit. People will think twice before backing the police in such circumstances, or in other circumstances involving difficult or dangerous police work, if they suspect an ungenerous attitude will be taken by the Metropolitan police in the event of an accident.

There should be a review of the general Metropolitan police policy that

> "Where (as here) a car is being pursued by police in the execution of their duty and an accident occurs the clear principle which applies is that unless there is evidence that police action could not be justified in the public interest or did not conform to a reasonable standard of care, then no legal liability falls upon the police to pay compensation."

That is not good enough, either for the policemen carrying out the work or for the public who would want to suppport them.

I am asking for two things. First, I am firmly of the opinion that the police should make at least an ex gratia payment to Carol Dempster for her loss: to a 25-year-old, £1,000 is a great deal of money. Secondly, there should be a new look at policy. Why should the police take such an ungenerous attitude? I have been informed that the position would be different had the incident occurred outside London; the Metropolitan police are operating differently from other police forces. I should like them to examine the matter. I also ask my hon. Friend the Minister to see whether moves can be made by the Home Office to see whether that policy can be changed.

My constituent is £1,000 worse off. She had no comprehensive insurance; which of us had at that age? For her sake, and for the sake of others in London, there should be a review. I urge the Minister to examine the facts that I have laid before the House, and to see whether anything can be done to ensure that when such an unfortunate accident happens again—as, inevitably, it will —the public will know that they will be compensated by the Metropolitan police, to keep their good name and the support of the public.

10.10 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Peter Lloyd): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) on taking the trouble to secure this debate and he explained forcefully why he did. He drew attention to the widespread concern about the danger to innocent members of the public who are caught up in police pursuits and suggested that there may be a need to provide some public indemnity against loss through personal injury or damage to property if good public-police relations are to be maintained.

My hon. Friend's constituent, Miss Carol Dempster—with whom we all have great sympathy—was, as he has clearly shown, just such an innocent member of the public who had the misfortune to be caught up in a police car chase. As a result, her car was badly damaged. She looks, not unnaturally, to the police for compensation, but finds, alas—as my hon. Friend correctly recounted —that they disclaim legal liability. My hon. Friend has expressed his view that the police have a moral responsibility to recompense an innocent member of the public in such circumstances.

It might be helpful if I, too, set out the facts of the case and identify the areas of dispute before discussing the way in which the case has been handled. On the evening of Wednesday 26 October 1988, a police officer stationed at Borehamwood police station saw a Ford Sierra motor car in St. Albans being driven by a man whom he knew to be disqualified from holding a licence. The police officer obtained a warrant for the man's arrest. Two days later, on 28 October, the driver of the Sierra, who has a record of theft from motor vehicles, went drinking at a number of public houses in Borehamwood, and broke into and stole property from two motor cars.

At about 9.35 pm the car was spotted in a hotel car park by the same officer who had seen him on the Wednesday evening. The man failed to stop when required to do so and drove off at speed, followed by the police vehicle. The Sierra was driven at speeds in excess of 70 mph in a 30 mph zone, with apparent reckless disregard for the safety of others. It swerved from side to side and hit one vehicle in the course of the pursuit. In Deacons Hill road, Borehamwood, the driver lost control of his vehicle, crossing into the path of Miss Dempster's car before crashing into a telegraph pole. Miss Dempster took avoiding action, but her car was hit by the Sierra. That, I understand, spun her car round before it was hit by the police pursuit car.

The driver of the Sierra was arrested and subsequently convicted of driving while disqualified, theft, possession of an offensive weapon, driving while unfit through drink, failing to provide a specimen and using a motor vehicle while uninsured.

Miss Dempster claims that, after she took action to avoid the Sierra, her car remained on the correct side of the road where it was hit by the police car, which had crossed into her carriageway. The police officer on the other hand alleges that Miss Dempster swerved to his side of the road, where the collision took place. As my hon. Friend knows, it is not unusual following a car accident for the drivers to

dispute the exact sequence of events. That matter is usually left to be settled between insurance companies. If agreement cannot be reached, the matter can be resolved in the courts. Once liability is determined, any claims can be settled.

Unfortunately, Miss Dempster, as she was perfectly entitled, had chosen not to take out a comprehensive policy of insurance and was insured only against third party risk. As my hon. Friend remarked, premiums for young people can be high and some prefer to make a saving and accept the risk of carrying the cost of any repairs or replacement of their vehicles if they are damaged. She was also, of course, unable to obtain the support of an insurance company in arguing her case that the Metropolitan police have legal liability.

However, legal liability could be established only if it could be shown that the police action in pursuing the car either could not be justified in the public interest or did not conform to a reasonable standard of care. The Metropolitan police carry their own risks and the force's accident claims branch acts, in effect, as an internal insurance compay for the receiver for the Metropolitan police district. If the branch concludes, on a consideration of all the facts of a case, that no legal liability rests upon the force, compensation is not paid. When an accident involves a car being pursued by the police in the execution of their duty, the branch must be additionally satisfied that the police action can be justified in the public interest and that it conformed to a reasonable standard of care.

A police officer faces a genuine dilemma, as I think that my hon. Friend was suggesting, in maintaining a balance between the apprehension of an offender and the safety of the public. If a driver fails to stop, the officer does not know whether he is dealing with a trivial matter or a serious offence. He has to make a very quick decision.

Responsibility for the manner in which a pursuit is undertaken rests solely, as it must, with the driver of the police car. While he is legally exempt from the observance of the speed limits and certain traffic lights and signs, he is not exempt from other requirements of traffic law. Crossroads, side roads and pedestrians must be carefully watched. The police driver is liable for the quality of his driving in the same way as any other driver.

The driver of the Sierra was wanted on a warrant for driving while disqualified. He refused to stop when required, and his actions throughout confirmed that he had no intention of stopping when required to do so by the police. Furthermore, the police driver was an experienced driver who had qualified as an advanced driver, which enabled him to drive at high speed with as much safety as possible in the circumstances.

The accident claims branch has considerable experience of motor accident claims and dealt, in the 1988-89 financial year, with more than 1,500 claims and payments totalling nearly £1 million. Therefore, there are many occasions when the police do pay out when they consider that they have a liability. The claims branch is satisfied that the evidence in this case is consistent with the Sierra driver forcing Miss Dempster's car into the path of the police vehicle while the latter was being driven on the correct side of the road, and that no liability rests with the Metropolitan police.

The accident claims branch, following the intervention of my hon. Friend, agreed to refer the papers to an independent solicitor specialising in civil liability cases for advice on the strength of the case. The solicitor was satisfied that the action of the police driver was fully justified and that on the facts it may be assumed that Miss Dempster's car verged into the path of the police car. He advises that her loss arose only as a result of the Sierra driver's action.

My hon. Friend suggests that the attitude of the Metropolitan police is rigid, whatever the legal liability, and that there is a moral duty to compensate his constituent. I sympathise with his view, but the receiver for the Metropolitan police has a duty to make payments from the Metropolitan police fund only when he has clear authority, and he must account for all payments.

In so far as Miss Dempster did not have comprehensive cover for her car, the receiver is in the same position as any insurance company, or for that matter any private individual, who finds that a vehicle for which he has responsibility is involved with a vehicle driven by a person who has only third party insurance and is aggrieved that his claim for compensation is refused. It may seem hard, but the fact is that a person who decides to have only limited insurance cover does take the risks that that carries.

What I have said, I know, offers no comfort to Miss Dempster, but it remains open to her to pursue a civil claim against the driver of the Sierra or against the receiver. That is of course a matter on which she will wish to take legal advice. But the wider issue raised by my hon. Friend about whether compensation should be payable to the innocent victims of police car pursuits, there have been developments since his constituent's accident.

For accidents that have occurred since 1 January 1989, the Motor Insurers Bureau operates a scheme that enables the victim of an uninsured driver to claim compensation. The bureau will meet any award made by a court if it remains unpaid. That scheme will not meet all cases uncovered by motor accident insurance, but it will close the gap. I regret that it offers no comfort to Miss Dempster, who must feel that, whichever way she turns, there is a barrier to settlement of her claim.

My hon. Friend will, I fear, continue to regard the attitude of the Metropolitan police as mean and rigid, but we must be careful not to establish a requirement on the police to pay compensation where adequate insurance arrangements already exist or to depart from the practice of linking payments to some sort of legal liability. However, I listened, as my hon. Friend asked, to the points that he made very cogently. I shall reflect carefully on his arguments both general and particular, but I am afraid that I would be misleading my hon. Friend and his constituent if I were to leave him with the impression that the current rules provide real scope for a change of approach in this case.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 6 June 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

MEDWAY TUNNEL BILL *[Lords]*

Order for consideration read.
To be considered tomorrow.

PORT OF TYNE BILL *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time tomorrow.

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

Health Boards

1. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are his criteria for appointments to health boards in Scotland.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): Individuals are appointed on the basis of the contribution that they can make to the duties and responsibilities of the health boards.

Mr. Griffiths: Does not the Secretary of State realise that the cuts and panic closures affecting hospitals in Lothian region made by the right hon. and learned Gentleman's Tory-appointed health board are an indictment of his system of appointment? Will he come with me to Longmore hospital in Edinburgh, where an excellent breast screening clinic and facilities for geriatric patients are threatened by a panic closure in eight weeks rather than in eight years? Will the Secretary of State give an assurance that Lothian health board will receive proper funding—or will he go?

Mr. Rifkind: I share the hon. Gentleman's anxiety to ensure that the health board's recommendations are considered on the basis of their implications for health care in the region. The hon. Gentleman should not suggest that the problem has been caused by underfunding. As he knows perfectly well, all Scottish health boards are funded in exactly the same way. The fact that Lothian finds itself to be seriously overspending is clearly a result of its own internal financial management—as the report now published by Peat, Marwick Mitchell clearly demonstrates.

Mr. Kirkwood: Will the Secretary of State guarantee that if health board appointments become more business oriented, as is presaged in the White Paper, he will pay particular attention to the successor bodies to the health councils, to ensure that they are properly funded and properly accountable, so that effective patient and consumer consultation boards can be established within the Health Service?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman makes a reasonable point. We shall certainly want to ensure that the boards offer the widest breadth of experience, consistent only with the important criterion of avoiding any conflict of interest between those who serve on health boards and those who have financial associations with the provision of health care.

Mr. Marlow: If Scottish health boards were to be financed and paid for by a Scottish Parliament or Assembly that raised taxes in Scotland, as opposed to being funded by the general Exchequer, what would be the increase in the taxes due from Scottish people?

Mr. Rifkind: If there were to be a Scottish Assembly and it had to fund Scottish health provision entirely from Scottish resources, there is no doubt that that would lead to a substantial increase in the amount of income tax paid by people in Scotland. Health expenditure in Scotland is about 25 per cent. higher per capita than that south of the border.

Mr. Galbraith: Surely ultimate responsibility for the current shambles in Lothian health board rests directly with the Secretary of State for Scotland. Is not the crisis due to the sheer and utter incompetence of the board members—all of whom were directly appointed by the Secretary of State, and half of whom have either direct or indirect connections with the Conservative party? Is not it the case that unless increased funding is made available to Lothian health board, the crisis will be resolved only by the Secretary of State reneging on his promises, closing hospitals and introducing measures that will directly affect patient care?

Mr. Rifkind: The Government have already been helpful with regard to the problems of Lothian health board by saying that it will not be required to pay for last year's overspend in the current year, but it is crucial that the health board, like all other health boards in Scotland, should gain control over its expenditure and resources. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that if he were speaking from this Dispatch Box, he would be the first to insist that all health boards in Scotland commit themselves to no more expenditure than the resources provided to them. If Lothian is the only health board in Scotland to have found itself in this difficulty, clearly that is a result of financial mismanagement within the health board.

Scottish Homes

2. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chairman of Scottish Homes; and if he discussed the current levels of capital spending on housing by the agency in Scotland.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): My right hon. and learned Friend and I regularly meet Sir James Mellon, chairman of Scottish Homes. Our discussions cover all aspects of Scottish Homes' functions and responsibilities.

Mr. McAllion: The Minister promised the tenants of Scottish Homes that there would be no element of

compulsion in moving them into other types of tenure. Does he now accept that the latest investment priorities declared by Scottish Homes, stating that it is its intention to invest in every other type of tenure before investing in its own stock and tenants, are tantamount to blackmail —trying to force them into other types of tenure? Does not that mean that effectively the Minister has reneged on his promise to tenants of Scottish Homes; is not he ashamed of himself; and should not he reverse those investment priorities or tender his own resignation?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman is incorrect on that subject. Funding for Scottish Homes' budget this year is some £356·5 million. I understand that the hon. Gentleman is primarily concerned with the project in, Fintry, which was delayed because of apprehensions expressed by some of his constituents. I believe that the estate-based strategy is being worked out and is likely to go ahead. Specific projects have begun or will begin shortly and other projects are under consideration as part of the continuing process of developing plans for the area. I shall draw the point that the hon. Gentleman has made to the attention of the chairman of Scottish Homes, but I stress to him that our commitment to upgrading Scottish Homes' stock remains as strong as ever.

Mr. Allan Stewart: When my hon. Friend next meets the chairman of Scottish Homes, will he discuss with him the importance of its work in the regeneration of Barrhead in my constituency? Is he aware that following the welcome announcement on industrial improvement areas by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Renfrew district council, in co-operation with other public sector agencies and the private sector, is preparing imaginative but realistic plans for the future of Barrhead? In encouraging Scottish Homes to clear the path and to implement plans, will my hon. Friend also take the opportunity to point out to Opposition Members that the greatest threat to the improvement of the quality of housing in Scotland would be a roof tax?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I agree with what my hon. Friend says about a roof tax, because it would swallow up a large part of the income of people who have bought their council house. Scottish Homes is now studying a consultancy report that considers the future of Barrhead. Housing is one aspect of the regeneration proposals. Scottish Homes will need to judge how best its involvement in this important project can complement other economic objectives of the Scottish Development Agency, the region and the district.

Mr. Ron Brown: Is not it a disgrace that the Government have conned people into buying so-called homes when the Minister and Scottish Homes know that in my area those properties were largely slums? A court case is being heard at the moment, and probably the Minister will argue that he cannot comment on that. Nevertheless, we still have tenants who want repairs to their homes, which they are not getting because Scottish Homes is hiding behind the law, the capitalist system and this Government. What has the Minister got to say to people in Leith who deserve support, repairs and justice? Will he give them that, because they need it?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman has raised that matter with me before, on behalf of his constituents. Tenants have applied for improvement grants to the district council, but they are some way down the queue of priorities. The pre-1984 backlog of improvement grants is being worked off quickly. The matter is a responsibility of the district council, but it does not have sufficient priority at present.

Mr. Brown: What is the Minister doing about the plight of tenants, as well as people who foolishly bought their slum houses?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: If the hon. Gentleman is referring to tenants of Scottish Homes, I shall of course draw the matter to the attention of the chairman. I should be grateful if the hon. Gentleman made it perfectly clear which streets he is talking about.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Brief questions lead to briefer answers and more hon. Members are then called.

Higher Education

3. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on measures to protect freedom of speech in institutions of Scottish higher education.

The Minister of State, Scottish Office (Mr. Ian Lang): Following our earlier undertaking to consider the position in Scotland, we have decided to consult interested parties on arrangements for safeguarding freedom of speech in universities and colleges in Scotland, in the light of which we shall consider whether any action is necessary.

Mr. Bennett: Does my hon. Friend recall the promise that was made on 20 June 1989 at column 268 in answer to a debate that I initiated on freedom of speech in Scottish universities and polytechnics—that the review would take place in six to nine months? As a year has now gone by, when can we expect the results of that review?

Mr. Lang: I recall the debate and the undertaking that was given, which was to consider the position in Scotland in the light of the review of the legislation, in particular section 43 of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986 as it affects England and Wales. That review is still under way. We shall obviously wish to take account of the outcome of that review when considering the position in Scotland. However, I hope that my hon. Friend welcomes the commitment that I have just given.

Mr. Watson: What advice does the Minister expect to give to regional councils that have been led to understand, although they have not yet been informed, that the technical and vocational education initiative is to be slashed by 50 per cent. in the coming year? What involvement did the Scottish Office have in the discussions and what advice does the Minister of State intend to give to regional councils whose preparations are well advanced for the training of young people in the coming academic year?

Mr. Lang: Some rephasing of the forward extension of TVEI is taking place. I welcome the £1·8 million that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Employment has announced for the extension of TVEI. However, that has nothing whatever to do with freedom of

speech, which is the subject of this question. I wish that the Opposition would spend more time on upholding freedom of speech rather than abusing it.

Mr. Dewar: Does the Minister accept that this is a serious matter and that I regret the fact that there appears to have been a shift in the Government's position? He will remember that the Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), made it clear on 7 June 1989 that "there was little evidence in Scotland of the problems that prompted the legislation south of the border."—[*Official Report*, 7 June 1989; Vol. 154, c. 210.] and led to the imposition of section 43 in England. I recognise that recently there was one deplorable incident at Glasgow university, but that was very much a case of rent-a-crowd. Does the Minister accept that if the law were to be changed on the basis of such a demonstration, it would delight those who are responsible for trouble, but it would be a sad day indeed for university freedoms in Scotland?

Mr. Lang: It is because the situation in Scotland was different that we did not follow our English colleagues down the road of section 43. However, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would wish us to fulfil our commitment to reconsider the matter and therefore to hold consultations. I hope that he will also support Conservative Members when we say that freedom of speech is vital. If, as Disraeli said, a university should be a place of light, liberty and learning, it can be none of those things unless freedom of speech is upheld.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my hon. Friend agree that those who seek to silence those with whom they disagree demonstrate their own unsuitability for higher education? Does he further agree that university authorities ought to adopt a more robust attitude toward those who behave in such a disruptive way?

Mr. Lang: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. I am glad that a number of universities are looking at their codes of practice and their codes of discipline to ensure that freedom of speech is upheld in our universities.

Local Government Finance

4. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received seeking changes in the poll tax legislation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I regularly receive representations about different aspects of the community charge.

Mr. Canavan: Is not the Secretary of State ashamed of the fact that he offered the people of Scotland as poll tax guinea pigs, that there was not a whimper of protest from Tory Members of Parliament during the first year of the Scottish poll tax, but that when the poll tax hit England and Wales it met with a storm of protest and the Prime Minister was forced to think again? If the Secretary of State is to avoid the accusation of being a silent stooge in the Cabinet, will he speak up and tell the Prime Minister that a few pussy-footed amendments will not satisfy the people of Scotland who are demanding the abolition of this evil tax?

Mr. Rifkind: I remind the hon. Gentleman that the poll tax applies throughout the United Kingdom——

Mr. John D. Taylor: No, not throughout the United Kingdom; only Great Britain.

Mr. Rifkind: The right hon. Gentleman is quite right to correct me with regard to Northern Ireland. The poll tax applies throughout Great Britain, unlike Labour's roof tax. We have yet to see whether the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan), who feels so strongly about these matters, wishes to impose on Scotland alone a roof tax, which the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway) has attacked and which has been attacked by the Scottish Labour party. The Leader of the Opposition has said that he certainly would not wish to impose it south of the border. The Labour party needs to address itself to that.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Will my right hon. and learned Friend acknowledge that it is better to address particular anomalies that emerge in relation to the tax rather than necessarily the tax itself? Does he recognise that there are several anomalies affecting merchant seamen, those who spend a considerable part of the year overseas and some holiday homes, and that individual community charge payers have had to take matters to the courts for a decision? That course of action is not open to every individual. Will my right hon. and learned Friend therefore make sure that the legislation is amended appropriately to deal with those specific anomalies?

Mr. Rifkind: We shall naturally look sympathetically at any constructive suggestions. There have already been important changes to the standard charge, which meet some of the points raised by my right hon. Friend. However, most of the examples to which he referred involve classification, when the community charge registration officer in one part of the country may have acted in a different way from the community charge registration officer in another area. In precisely those circumstances an appeal to the courts is a way of ensuring uniformity and fairness of treatment throughout the country.

Jobs, Glasgow

5. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what special measures he intends taking to create jobs in the east end of Glasgow.

Mr. Lang: Jobs are created by market forces, not by Governments. However, the Government continue to support a number of initiatives in the east end of Glasgow, including the provision of business advice and training, with the aim of stimulating and protecting employment in the area.

Mr. Marshall: Is the Minister totally ignorant—[HON. MEMBERS: "Yes."]—of the fact that four of the seven constituencies with the highest unemployment in Scotland cover the east end of Glasgow? Does not he realise that the problem cannot be solved without special Government assistance? Just when will he do something about it? His reply is disgracefully inadequate. We are sick and tired of promises, press releases and cosmetic exercises. Just when will the Minister and his colleagues in Government realise that the people of Scotland and of Glasgow want the same job opportunities as people in London and the south of England? Can he tell the House when that day will come?

Mr. Lang: It seems to me that the hon. Gentleman, if not ignorant, is at least blind to the success of Government policies in Glasgow as elsewhere. In the past three years unemployment in Glasgow has fallen by no less than 29,000. In the hon. Gentleman's own constituency, unemployment stood at 7,000 in January 1987, but is now down to 4,500. He also should know that the Government are giving considerable support through the SDA to the East End Executive and that through the SDA there have been a number of projects to the value of £6 million in Shettleston. In those and other ways the Government are helping to assist the development of enterprise and employment in the east end of Glasgow.

Mr. Oppenheim: Will my hon. Friend give a warm welcome to the statement made by the chief Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), when he said on Radio 4 on 28 May that Scotland does very well out of central Government funding and remains substantially funded from England? While it may be a little premature for the hon. Member for Garscadden to start talking as if he were a Minister, is not his change of heart very welcome?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is probably right. It is true that certain parts of Scotland get special help from the Government, as do certain parts of England, including the north-east and the north-west. That help is given because it is needed to generate employment and enterprise in areas of severe dereliction and difficulty. It is evidence of the success of Government policies in Glasgow that unemployment there has fallen by 29,000 over the past three years.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: The Minister will know that in my constituency, in the Dennistoun area of the east end of Glasgow, more than 550 jobs in the tobacco industry have to go. Does he agree that it is a sad day when any industry that has increased its productivity and has good industrial relations and whose workers have worked there for generations finds that when Lord Hanson takes over a company, he strips the assets and closes factories? Surely the Minister and his colleagues in the Department of Trade and Industry should do something about those asset-stripping companies.

Mr. Lang: I sympathise with the hon. Gentleman on the loss of some 530 jobs in his constituency because of the closure. However, that loss will take place over the next two years and Hanson has given undertakings on assistance with counselling, job searches and training activities. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman agrees that those decisions must be taken on commercial grounds and that industry must remain competitive, or more jobs will be lost. I am sure that he will welcome the fact that, by taking a commercial and competitive approach to the economy, the Government's efforts have resulted in a fall in unemployment in his constituency of about 3,000 over the past three years.

Helicopter Ambulance Service

6. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on what criteria the decision was taken that a helicopter ambulance service is to be fully funded by the National Health Service in Scotland.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Forsyth): A commercially sponsored trial in the highlands shows that a helicopter ambulance service represented value for money and improved the service greatly. The service is continuing on the basis that it will not add to the costs to the National Health Service overall.

Mr. Harris: Is my hon. Friend aware that, although the decision to fund the helicopter service in Scotland in full from Government sources is not begrudged in Cornwall, it caused dismay, consternation and puzzlement? The NHS has refused to make any contribution to the first helicopter ambulance service, which was provided in Cornwall. Did any special circumstances apply to the decision to fund in full the operating costs of the service in Scotland? Does my hon. Friend accept that the experience in Cornwall with that first helicopter ambulance service shows that the service is viable and valuable? Should not the same criteria therefore apply?

Mr. Forsyth: The helicopter ambulance service in Cornwall does a splendid job and has been commercially sponsored and supported by the community. Following the pilot scheme in Scotland, which was commercially sponsored, it became clear that the service represented value for money and that it would improve the quality of patient care. For those reasons, and within the existing resources available to the ambulance service, it was decided to take on the helicopter ambulance service for the highlands. The decision was based on the interests of patient care. Any expansion of that service may well involve sponsorship as it applied in Cornwall, but because that is not my responsibility, I cannot give my hon. Friend any detail on aspects relating to the project in Cornwall.

Mr. Home Robertson: Is the Minister aware that the proposal to cut hospital services in East Lothian by a crippling 22 per cent., including the closure of the casualty unit at Roodlands hospital in Haddington——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question is about the helicopter ambulance service.

Mr. Home Robertson: My question will be about that. That proposal will give rise to serious difficulties in transporting about 600 casualty patients a month from East Lothian to the accident emergency unit at Edinburgh royal infirmary. Does the Minister believe that the existing ambulance service can cope with that, or is he thinking of helicopters?

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that at Scottish Question Time he has cheered when the Government's policy on competitive tendering has been attacked. He will be aware also that the revenues that have been saved in the Scottish ambulance service as a result of the pilot scheme on competitive tendering in my constituency are almost sufficient, over the three-year period, to meet the costs of the helicopter ambulance service.

The hon. Gentleman will know that Lothian health board's proposals, which involve hospitals in his constituency, are out at consultation at present, and they will come to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for consideration in due course.

Roads

7. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many bypasses in Scotland are currently under construction; and how many further ones are planned.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Development Department has nine trunk road bypasses currently under construction, with a further 23 currently programmed. Bypasses on non-trunk roads in Scotland are of course a matter for the regional councils as roads authorities.

Mr. Cran: Does my hon. Friend agree that the £1·6 billion of potential and actual spending on Scottish roads and bypasses has benefited the motoring public and has cut my regular journey to Aberdeen by about an hour and a half as a result of the improvements to the A94? Does he also agree that that spending has improved the competitiveness of Scottish companies and, if that is not enough, has contributed towards the attraction of £2·6 billion of inward investment into Scotland since 1981?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Spending on roads is 15 per cent. in Scotland higher than in England, where there has also been a substantial increase in resources. This year we are spending £205 million of capital and current expenditure which we believe is extremely important for jobs. My hon. Friend referred to Aberdeen; the upgrading of the road between Inverness and Aberdeen is the joint priority in Scotland along with the M74. We published recently a progress report about the bypasses that we hope will be brought to fruition before long in many parts of Scotland which will be important for jobs and will benefit the environment.

Mr. Eadie: Although the Minister may give us a roll-call of expenditure on bypasses, does he recall that in my constituency there is a serious problem in Dalkeith with the A68? Will the Minister consider that problem? Traffic in Dalkeith is a disgrace, and we badly need the A68 bypass.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Dalkeith bypass will go ahead as quickly as possible and we hope that it will greatly benefit the hon. Gentleman's constituents. As the hon. Gentleman is aware, the A7 will be upgraded to dual carriageway status later in the 1990s and we hope that that will also be of substantial benefit. If the hon. Gentleman is aware of particular problems on the A68 with accident blackspots, I should be grateful if he would let me know so that we can set in hand accident remedial schemes straight away.

Sir Hector Monro: May I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister on the expenditure on the A75 between Gretna and Stranraer, including the bypasses at Annan, Castle Douglas, Gatehouse and Glenluce? There are many more to come including one for Dumfries. Is not that exceptionally wise expenditure which will benefit industry, agriculture and tourism and is not it something that the Government should continue with all possible haste?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I assure my hon. Friend that the progress on the M74 is such that it may be the fastest motorway to be built in Britain to date. We certainly intend to go ahead as quickly as possible.

Mr. Wilson: The Minister will already know of the concern in my constituency about the delays to the Ardrossan-Saltcoats-Stevenston bypass and perhaps he can say something about its prospects. Does he agree that there is a danger of defeating the purpose of bypasses if they act as magnets for developments round them, particularly in green belts?

On a subject that is closely related, does the Minister agree that the fate of football clubs should not be decided by property developers behind closed doors without regard to the interests and wishes of the people who support those clubs and attach a great deal of importance to them?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is not that a wee bit wide of roads?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman was bypassing the question. However, he made a serious point about the Ardrossan-Saltcoats bypass. About 23 bypasses are planned to start in Scotland and we will take the hon. Gentleman's point into account. Nine bypasses are under construction now and considerably more are likely to go ahead by 1991, including one at Bennane Hill on the A77. I must leave the Hearts bypass to my hon. Friend the Minister for Sport to answer another day.

Mr. John D. Taylor: Does the Minister recognise that the people of Northern Ireland, living just 20 miles or so from the coast of Scotland, regard the bypasses and roads in the west of Scotland as their lifeline into the rest of the United Kingdom and to Europe? In future, will he take that into account, consult the Northern Ireland Office and seek its support and co-operation for the improvement of the road system in any applications made to Brussels for European Economic Community support?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall certainly contact my colleagues in the Northern Ireland Office to make them aware of the right hon. Gentleman's point. The commitment to upgrade the A75, which is a Eurolink with Northern Ireland, is moving steadily forwards fulfilment.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: In contradiction to the Opposition, will my hon. Friend the Minister tell the House how grateful Perth is for its southern bypass so that St. Johnstone football club can have the most modern football ground in Scotland with the best facilities in a greenpeace site—*[Interruption.]*—where people can enjoy the football?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We believe that all road projects should be environmentally friendly, and we shall do everything within our power to ensure that that happens.

Steel Industry

8. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he intends to meet trade union representatives from the Scottish steel industry to discuss investment in the Scottish steel industry.

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend the Minister of State and I met representatives of the steel trade unions in Scotland recently.

Dr. Reid: I am glad that the Secretary of State met representatives of the work force at Dalzell and Ravenscraig because their jobs are on the line and they

know better than any hon. Member the problems of the steel industry. Is the Secretary of State aware of growing suspicion among workers' representatives and others that the closure of the hot strip mill at Ravenscraig is a result of the manipulation of the monopoly position of British Steel? What will he do to investigate that? I am aware that he welcomed the study of the market by Motherwell district council, but that will not be sufficient. What independent investigation has the Scottish Office initiated, or does it intend to initiate, into the competitive—or otherwise—practices of British Steel now and in the future?

Mr. Rifkind: We have said that the first priority is to try to obtain greater information—indeed, some information—from British Steel on the reasoning and thinking behind its announcement. I endorse what the hon. Gentleman said about the attitude of the work force. When I wrote to Sir Robert Scholey last week seeking further information of the kind that I have indicated, I also suggested to him that he might find it helpful to meet representatives of the work force at Ravenscraig not only to explain to them the thinking behind his proposals but to hear their constructive suggestions on how they can continue to make a viable contribution to the well-being of British Steel as a whole through the Ravenscraig works.

Mr. Sillars: Is the Secretary of State aware that one of the most important meetings this year on investment in the future of the Scottish steel industry will be the annual general meeting of British Steel in July? Will he confirm that one of the privileges of the golden share held by the Government is that a Crown Minister has the right to attend and address the shareholders' meeting? Will the Secretary of State take the opportunity in July to exercise that right and address the board and the shareholders on the unfairness of the investment by British Steel since 1983 and try to elicit from the meeting the information that has so far been denied to us?

Mr. Rifkind: However sincere the hon. Gentleman's intention might be in making that proposition, it is a rather foolish suggestion. He knows as well as I do that the golden share is relevant only to any proposal by an outside interest to acquire more than 15 per cent. in the shareholding of British Steel. That is made quite clear by the prospectus, and the hon. Gentleman knows it as well as I do.

Mr. Holt: May I remind my right hon. and learned Friend that we are talking about the British steel industry and that there will be considerable resentment among my constituents and others on Teesside if he seeks in any way unduly to influence British Steel in making its commercial decisions simply because of the volume of voices from the parliamentary Labour party?

Mr. Rifkind: Although I understand my hon. Friend's views, I remind him that the Government amendment, which the House approved, called upon British Steel to explain and defend its decision with regard to its proposals for the hot strip mill, and that is exactly what we intend to do.

Mr. Dewar: Does the Secretary of State accept that it is not encouraging to hear a Minister of the Crown say that he is hoping to get some information from British Steel? Is the Secretary of State receiving information from the company about the arguments, the facts and the figures? Has Sir Robert Scholey stated that he will discuss his case openly and frankly with the work force and with the Government? What steps does the Secretary of State propose to take if that co-operation is not forthcoming? If the information does come forward, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman look seriously at the need to challenge and test the assumptions behind that disastrous decision, perhaps with the help of independent advice?

Mr. Rifkind: Naturally, I understand the hon. Gentleman's need to make those remarks. However, I remind him that the Labour party's policy on this matter is, in practically all respects, exactly the same as the Government's. The Labour party has clearly ruled out the renationalisation of British Steel. It therefore follows that Labour is saying exactly the same as everyone else—that this is ultimately a decision for British Steel. If my assumption about Labour's policy towards the renationalisation of the steel industry is incorrect, I have no doubt that the hon. Gentleman will wish to make that clear.

Water Charges

9. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the percentage increases in Scotland on the community water charge between 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The average personal community water charge has risen by less than 9 per cent.

Mr. Wallace: The Minister must know that as the community water charge is not rebatable, the figure that he has announced amounts to quite an additional burden, especially on people with low incomes. As it is estimated that £1·25 billion will be required to improve water quality to meet the regulations, the community water charge looks set to become a crippling burden on families unless the Government do more to help local authorities. What proposals do the Government have to match the capital debt write-off for and the dowry given to the water companies in England and Wales before privatisation? Will the Government give the same help to Scottish local authorities? If they do not, Scottish families, businesses and communities look set to be crippled by high water charges throughout the 1990s.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The cash injections into eight of the 10 water authorities in England and Wales were part of the capital restructuring before privatisation which the hon. Gentleman knows is not happening in Scotland. The Scottish Office is considering the implications for Scotland. However, I stress that water charges are very much lower in Scotland than they are south of the border. The average household in Scotland pays just over £41 per year for water, whereas in England the figure is £64. Similarly, much more is paid per head south of the border for sewerage than is paid in Scotland. The hon. Gentleman knows that there are special circumstances in Shetland because of the negotiations over the Sullom Voe terminal, but, as Shetland has the lowest community charge in Scotland and Orkney the second lowest, the whole picture must be taken into account.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Will my hon. Friend bear in mind not only the domestic water charge payer, but the business water charge payer in areas such as Grampian, which last

year had a dramatic increase in its water charges? When we see debts being written off for the English water boards, there is obviously anxiety among high water users, such as the food-processing and paper-making industries, that they cannot compete on level terms with similar industries south of the border because of the water charges that they must pay.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There is a general desire for harmonisation. However, I stress that the non-domestic water rate for premises that are not connected to a metered water supply is levied in Scotland according to a proportion of the net annual value. That proportion is determined by the water authority and ranges from 100 per cent. to 12·5 per cent., depending on the type of premises. In general, we are seeking harmonisation.

Mr. Douglas: Does the Minister accept that there is a feeling that the charges have been held low in anticipation of the regional elections? Does he further accept that one of the anomalies of this matter, as with the poll tax, is that the charges are not income related? If the Secretary of State is looking to remove anomalies, what proposals is he putting before the Cabinet to make the poll tax and the water charge tax income related?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I must stress to the hon. Gentleman again that water charges in Scotland are much lower than those south of the border. I consider that that is a satisfactory position. There are many more difficulties with business rate payers who have to pay more in Scotland. We are trying to harmonise as quickly as practicable.

Income is taken into account in the rebate system, and a considerable number of people are exempt from water charges. Full-time students are entitled to an 80 per cent. rebate. People are exempt from personal community water charges if their premises do not receive a public water supply. Any person listed in the schedule to the Abolition of Domestic Rates Etc. (Scotland) Act 1987 who is exempt from the personal community charge is also exempt from the community water charge. That includes the severely mentally impaired and long-term and residential care home patients.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the water charge is use related and that if we could relate any form of local authority expenditure to use, we would not need a standard licence fee for the use of local authority services, which is the equity that the community charge represents?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I thank that I can explain to my hon. and learned Friend that water charges depend on a variety of factors such as the cost of treating and supplying the water, the amount of pumping facilities, the level of capital debt and the method of apportionment between classes of consumer. All those matters can vary among local authorities in Scotland and in fact do.

Glasgow-East Kilbride Railway

10. **Mr. Ingram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has received the submission from the East Kilbride development corporation and ScotRail to build a new railway station in East Kilbride and to extend the Glasgow-East Kilbride railway; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The submission from East Kilbride development corporation and ScotRail on the building of a new railway station in East Kilbride has been received and is being considered. I expect to announce a decision soon.

Mr. Ingram: Is the Minister aware that the long delay in reaching a decision on this matter is causing serious anxiety and uncertainty to householders who will lose their homes if the development goes ahead? Will he explain why it has taken so long to reach a decision on what is, after all, a relatively straightforward matter of extending a railway line a few hundred yards and building a modern up-to-date railway station to service the needs of commuters to and from East Kilbride? Will he give me an assurance that the answer that he has just given means that we shall receive a decision from the Minister in a matter of weeks, not of long, weary months?

Mr. Lang: I assure the hon. Gentleman that "soon" means soon. It is important that such decisions are carefully considered in the normal way. That includes an economic appraisal. That matter is in hand and I hope to set the hon. Gentleman's mind at rest in early course.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Will my hon. Friend confirm the importance of the Glasgow-East Kilbride line to the people of Eastwood? Will he congratulate Strathclyde region on putting new rolling stock on the Glasgow-East Kilbride line and the Glasgow-Barrhead line? On the point about reopening stations raised by the hon. Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram), is not it encouraging that several new railway stations are being opened in the Greater Glasgow area—one example being Dumbreck, which is only five minutes from where I live?

Mr. Lang: I agree with my hon. Friend. As a result of a grant from my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State of about £30 million two years ago, there has been a substantial expansion and improvement in the rolling stock in Strathclyde. Last year about five stations were opened or reopened. This year 10 stations are scheduled to be reopened in the Strathclyde area, including Dumbreck, to which my hon. Friend referred.

Housing

11. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what initiatives he intends to take with respect to solving Scotland's housing problem.

15. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what initiatives he intends to take with respect to solving Scotland's housing problem.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend and I are developing a rural housing strategy for Scotland through Scottish Homes and we have asked Scottish Homes to give priority to the problem of homelessness.

Mr. Salmond: As 100,000 Scots are now on council house waiting lists and homelessness is even higher in Scotland than it is in England and Wales, when will an emergency programme for Scottish housing be set up to match the necessary programme for homelessness in London and the south-east of England? The south of England has 30 per cent. of the population of the United Kingdom and obtains 50 per cent. of mortgage tax relief

—an additional subsidy to the subsidy junkies of the south-east of £1,000 million. When will that spending be matched by investment in public sector housing in Scotland and elsewhere?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We have increased the net capital allocations at the final stage by about £40 million above the previous year. A huge number of houses —more than 205,000—has been built in the past 10 years. The public sector built almost 60,000. We believe that the housing associations have an important role in catering for people with special needs and that the district councils are taking their statutory responsibilities seriously. Although each year there may be 25,000 or more applications from homeless people, the district councils are finding them places to stay.

Mr. Salmond: Rubbish.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The district councils are operating extremely effectively. We believe that Scottish Homes should give priority to assisting them in that purpose.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: How can the Minister reconcile his answers at parliamentary questions in October last year, when he made it clear that the Scottish Development Department did not keep estimates of homelessness or overcrowding in Scotland, with a letter circulated in May this year to all Scottish Members in which he attacked Shelter, an organisation which does an effective job combating homelessness, for keeping such records? Will he stop talking about net capital allocations and instead talk about gross capital allocations? Last year the budget in Scotland was slashed by £51 million and in areas such as Moray that meant a reduction of 15 per cent. When will he take action to reduce and eradicate this social injustice?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: As for gross capital allocations, if district councils, especially in cities, processed right-to-buy applications more speedily, there would be millions of pounds extra to spend on Government housing this year. A few days ago I visited the hon. Lady's district council and saw the housing there. It is making good progress with the projects before it. The rural housing strategy, on which we hope to reach a decision on the way forward certainly by the autumn, will be of considerable assistance in helping to bring back into use many of the 130,000 empty houses in Scotland. I hope that that will have relevance in many rural areas, including that of the hon. Lady.

Mrs. Fyfe: How many council houses in Scotland are unfit to live in because of dampness and other problems? When does the Minister expect every family in Scotland to have a house fit to live in at the current rate of financial contributions from the Government?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We think that it is a serious problem that about 48,000 houses have rising damp and condensation, but it is for the district councils concerned, which know their stock best, to choose the priorities for dealing with these matters. Many are completing local house condition surveys, which we welcome.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Does my hon. Friend agree that the problem in Scotland is that too much housing is in the public sector? Is he aware that Scotland has a lower percentage of owner-occupation than Czechoslovakia? What are the Government doing to speed the privatisation of the housing stock in Scotland?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Approaching 200,000 public sector tenants have purchased their homes in Scotland and we have a rents-to-mortgages trial scheme. As the Prime Minister said, if that scheme proves itself, it will be extended.

Mr. Maxton: If the Minister genuinely believes that local authorities are dealing with the problem of the 28,000 homeless people in Scotland, what is his answer to the leaders of the housing committees of Scotland's four largest housing authorities who yesterday claimed that there was a major housing crisis because the Government had cut £51 million in real terms of capital allocations? When will he recognise the housing crisis, shed his prejudices against council housing and give local authorities the money that they need to stop thousands of our fellow Scots suffering from poor housing conditions?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Cities such as Edinburgh and Dundee, and to a lesser extent Glasgow, are taking almost a year to process council house sales. If that period is reduced to seven and a half months, extra money will be available to those cities to spend on their public sector stock. It is necessary to bring back into use as many as possible of the 128,000 to 130,000 vacant houses in Scotland.

Industrial Development

12. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chairman of the Scottish Development Agency to discuss industrial development in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: I last met the chairman of the Scottish Development Agency on 24 March at a dinner for UK-Japan 2000, and my hon. Friend the Minister of State met him on 4 June.

Mr. Foulkes: Has the Secretary of State examined the distribution throughout Scotland of inward investment projects during the past five years, and has he reached the same conclusion as have the people and council of Cumnock and Doon Valley—that Locate in Scotland seems entirely unaware of the substantial advantages for inward investment of locating in a district that has higher unemployment, as the Secretary of State knows well, than in any travel-to-work area in mainland Britain? Will he ensure that Locate in Scotland is aware of the advantages of locating inward investment in Cumnock and Doon Valley? Will he encourage Locate in Scotland to try to make companies from the overheated south-east of England that want to find alternative locations aware of the quality of life that they will find in Cumnock and Doon Valley?

Mr. Rifkind: Naturally we are anxious that, wherever possible, inward investment should go to the areas with the most unemployment, but at the end of the day it is for the companies to decide their locations. If the Government were to seek to direct them, they would not come to Scotland in the first place. Ayrshire has been relatively fortunate for example, with the Caledonian paper factory

which, although located in Irvine, produces jobs throughout Ayrshire. I know that the hon. Gentleman will welcome that.

Sir Hector Monro: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the Scottish Development Agency, the regional economic development committee and the enterprise trusts have had substantial success in the past few years in bringing industry to Scotland? Will he say by how much unemployment has fallen in Scotland in each of the past three years?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is correct. Unemployment in Scotland has fallen in the past three years at a higher rate than at any other time in recorded history. It is interesting that Scottish unemployment is now below the level of that of many European Community countries.

Mr. Hood: May I tell the Secretary of State about the real problem facing areas such as Cumnock and Clydesdale? The town of Larkhall in my constituency is next to the A74. It contains massive industrial sites, but has not been properly served by Locate in Scotland because it seems not to know of it, and it does not let anyone concerned with inward investment know about the area. We expect Locate in Scotland to address the problem, and to represent all communities instead of all parts of Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: I assure the hon. Gentleman that Locate in Scotland has no bias in favour of or against any area. As for the area about which the hon. Gentleman is concerned, the improvement of the A74 to motorway status will make the area even more attractive to investment than it has been in the past.

Employment Training

13. **Mr. McLeish:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the estimated total number of employment training entrants in 1990-91.

Mr. Lang: Resources available for employment training in Scotland in 1990-91 have been based on an estimate of an average of 28,500 people in training at any one time. Over 55,000 entered employment training in 1989-90.

Mr. McLeish: Why is Scotland suffering such savage cuts in its training budget? Will the Minister confirm that £30 million has been cut from the youth training budget for the next two years? Has he had time to assess the impact of yesterday's announcement of 400 redundancies by Astra Training Services Ltd? That will impact on Scottish skill centres.

Mr. Lang: We do not need lectures from the Labour party on cutting training programmes. We are spending about six times as much in cash terms on training as did the Labour Government in their last year. We spend a higher proportion of our gross domestic product on training than do the United States, Germany or Japan. In the past four years, expenditure on training has risen by 60 per cent. at a time when unemployment has fallen by 50 per cent. Of course, it makes sense to adjust our training programmes and budgets to take account of falling unemployment and a reduced client group for those programmes. That is the right way to manage the programmes.

Mr. Worthington: During the past few months, the Minister has been in the unfortunate position of having to announce cuts imposed by the Department of Employment on employment training, the technical and vocational education initiative, youth training and the European social fund. The Minister has claimed that next year the Scottish Office will be in control of training. Is that true? Next year, will we be able to control those factors from within Scotland, or will we continue to have Department of Employment cock-ups?

Mr. Lang: Last year, the average number of people in employment training schemes was 26,000. For 1990-91 we are budgeting for an estimated 28,500, which is an increase in employment training. The training schemes are increasingly successful, to the embarrassment and discomfort of the Labour party, which has tried to undermine and oppose them.

As to the control of training policies, the hon. Gentleman knows that by merging the Training Agency with the SDA to create Scottish Enterprise and devolving control of the policies in detail to the local enterprise companies, we shall achieve the kind of flexibility and diversity within the overall training programme on a United Kingdom basis that will lead to better training and better job opportunities throughout Scotland.

National Health Service

14. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives of the British Medical Association to discuss the current circumstances of the National Health Service in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I last met the BMA on 26 March 1990.

Mr. McAvoy: Does the Minister recall that members of the BMA along with all the people of Cambuslang and Rutherglen rejected the plan by Greater Glasgow health board to scrap a new hospital and to turn over care of the elderly to Takare, a private company? Despite boasts that this was a good financial deal for the public, the health board is refusing to reveal details of the weekly costs of the beds that will be paid to Takare. Will the Minister instruct the health board to reveal the true cost to the public of privatising care of the elderly?

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman has the distinction of being one of the few Members of Parliament to come here to complain that a new facility for the elderly will be built in his constituency, faster than would otherwise have been the case, which will provide 180 beds at a lower cost to the Health Service. I hope that every one of his constituents is aware of his position because he is putting his own political dogma before the interests of patient care.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR FRIDAY 22 JUNE

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. Lewis Stevens
Mr. David Martin
Mr. Archy Kirkwood

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Mr. Speaker: With the permission of the House I shall put together the four motions relating to European Community documents.

Ordered,

That European Community Document No. 10499/89, relating to production and labelling of organic food, be referred to a Standing Committee on European Community Documents.

That European Community Document No. 9825/89 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 2nd May 1990, relating to game and rabbit meat, be referred to a Standing Committee on European Community Documents.

That European Community Document No. 10438/89 and the Supplementary Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 12th March 1990, relating to marketing standards for poultrymeat, be referred to a Standing Committee on European Community Documents.

That European Community Documents Nos. 4780/90, relating to health rules for poultrymeat, 4596/90, relating to health rules for fresh meat, 4781/90, relating to health rules for meat products, 4863/90, relating to health rules for minced meat and certain other meat preparations, and 4782/90, relating to the conditions for granting derogations from specific Community health rules on the production and marketing of products of animal origin, be referred to a Standing Committee on European Community Documents. —*[Mr. Fallon.]*

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the draft Planning and Building Regulations (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Order 1990 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Fallon.]*

Injurious Affection (Amendment)

3.33 pm

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to reduce the time limits within which compensation may be claimed under the law of injurious affection.

I am concerned principally with those people in Kent, particularly in my constituency, who will be adversely affected by the channel tunnel rail link and various concomitant works. However, the Bill would also benefit people in other constituencies being immediately affected by motorways or other works of public transport construction.

The law as it stands means that compensation does not become payable until 12 months after the first date of use of whatever is in question. As things are progressing at the moment, it looks unlikely that the channel tunnel rail link will be up and running before the turn of the century.

Constituents of mine and those of my hon. Friends who are just outside the 240 m corridor will not have their properties compulsorily purchased, they will have all the uncertainty until construction is complete, they will suffer nuisance during construction and, when the first train runs, they will have to wait 12 months before they can prove nuisance. The Bill sets out to reduce that period so that people who are injuriously affected by various works of construction will be able to claim within three months rather than 12.

The present arrangements are set out in the Land Compensation Act 1973. When that Act was passed, there had been no major railway construction since the turn of the century. We need to look in detail at our planning and compensation laws to see whether they are adequate to deal with this new phenomenon of the first major railway construction for so many years. In particular, I am worried about those constituents who will not be affected by the much talked about new high-speed rail link but who will be affected by all the concomitant works for freight that are being carried out on other lines. Those people will not be able to get any compensation unless there is negligence in the course of construction.

While British Rail says that the loop lines at Headcorn and elsewhere are merely for intensification of the use of existing lines, those who are affected by them, no matter how closely, cannot claim compensation because the Land Compensation Act specifically excluded intensification of use as a ground for claiming compensation. However, I could show hon. Members the houses of constituents in which cracks are already quite obvious and where there is already subsidence and immense noise pollution.

I am aware that the Government take the matter seriously. They have shown that by the Department of Transport initiative in setting up a committee specifically to look at noise nuisance. However, that committee's deliberations are likely to be long and I do not know whether ultimately they will help immediately those who will be affected by the various construction works.

If a nuisance can be proved within three months, it will not go away in the next nine months. Why is it necessary to wait 12 months if one can prove immediate nuisance? I do not understand that. There are major benefits in reducing the period to three months. First, there is the obvious effect on householders who are suffering uncertainty about the value of their property and about the nuisance. A three-month period would give a shorter time scale in which the Lands Tribunal could work and in which appeals could be made, and would therefore remove the complicating factors that can arise in 12 months.

For example, if a householder sells his property before the 12 months have elapsed, there are additional complications in adjusting the compensation. There would be benefit in the administration of the law, as well as benefit to those householders who are suffering. The complicated adjustment that is necessitated by many interim effects which can arise between three and 12 months, such as adjustments to the value of the property, inflation, market changes and other influencing factors, would also be subject to a shorter time scale, and that would make matters neater and tidier.

My prime concern is that my constituents and the constituents of the other sponsors of the Bill in Canterbury, Gravesend and Dartford are all suffering because of inadequate compensation laws. My Bill would reduce a further period of uncertainty for which there appears to be no good reason and which inflicts further mental suffering as well as suffering caused by physical nuisance.

These matters are causing more problems in Kent than are generally recognised. If my constituents must wait another five, six or seven years for construction to take place, only to be asked to sit back and suffer one year's blight of nuisance, noise, house damage and undervaluing of property, they are faced with a monstrous proposal. A simple change in the law would at least reduce that blight if it could not entirely eliminate it.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Miss Ann Widdecombe, Mr. Julian Brazier, Mr. Jacques Arnold, Mr. Bob Dunn, Mr. Andrew Rowe, Mr. Roger Sims and Mr. David Shaw.

INJURIOUS AFFECTION (AMENDMENT)

Miss Ann Widdecombe accordingly presented a Bill to reduce the time limits within which compensation may be claimed under the law of injurious affection: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 6 July and to be printed. [Bill 155.]

Points of Order

3.41 pm

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You must be aware, Sir, of the great respect in which you are held in the House in defending the rights of individual Members and the rights of the House of Commons. Will you tell us whether you have made the views of the House known to the other place—the latter-day 1930s appeasers—on the War Crimes Bill? Have the Government made available any knowledge to you that an early statement will be made so that the Bill can be sent back to the other place and their Lordships sent packing in the interests of the democracy of this country?

Mr. Speaker: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman should ask me whether I have let my views be known on that matter. He certainly heard the views of the Prime Minister yesterday. The matter is one for the Government, not for me.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) has prompted a rash of points of order on an Opposition day. Points of order will take time out of the time for the debate.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You have heard the views of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) on the powers of the other place, and there are Opposition Members who believe in abolishing the House of Lords. We are still battling to get that proposal into a policy review before the general election. Apart from all that, I think that there is a matter that you should clarify. Many Speakers go to the House of Lords when they have finished their stint here. I reckon that, on the basis of what was said yesterday about Members declaring their interests, you should tell us what your intentions are, Mr. Speaker, before you consider your response to the point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman has given me a lead. That is precisely why I shall say nothing.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Whatever your plans may or may not be—I hope that you will be in this place for quite a while yet—may I ask whether there will be some way in which the House will be able to express clearly the fact that, on a free vote, there was an overwhelming majority in favour of the War Crimes Bill, which has been entirely ignored by the other place? There has been much speculation in the press that there will be an opportunity for a debate, when the House can reaffirm its decision. Have you been notified, Mr. Speaker, whether such a debate will take place in the near future?

Mr. Speaker: I have not been notified. However, we have business questions tomorrow, and if the hon. Gentleman is fortunate enough to catch my eye, he may be able to put his question to the Leader of the House. The right hon. and learned Gentleman is in his place and I am sure that he has heard what has been said.

Opposition Day

[14TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Eye Tests

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

3.43 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): I beg to move,

That this House records its alarm that since Her Majesty's Government ended the provision of free eye examinations the number of eye tests has fallen by over two million; notes that Her Majesty's Government's policy of leaving charges for eye tests to be settled by the market has resulted in a typical charge of £12·00; concludes that charges are deterring many members of the public from seeking eye tests, thereby putting their sight and health at risk; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to restore a free preventive service for eye examinations.

The Secretary of State will recall that his first reappearance at the Dispatch Box in his current role was to defend the abolition of the free eye test in a debate on a Lords amendment to the Health and Medicines Bill. In the patois of sketch writers, he made a speech which would normally be described as "robust". I remember that he was jolly cross with the rest of us for defending the Lords amendment.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman accused right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House who disagreed with him of crying wolf. He said that the idea that people will be deterred from coming forward for an eye test because of a charge was

"contrary to common sense as well as the evidence . . . We must ask how many people, if any, will be deterred from going to the optician by the prospect—and it is no more than a prospect—that many opticians will charge £10."—[*Official Report*, 1 November 1988; Vol. 139, c. 923.]

I appreciate that the Secretary of State was asking a rhetorical question, and I apologise for the fact that the rhetorical pause that followed it has lasted 18 months. However, we can now answer the right hon. and learned Gentleman's question. The answer to his question of how many people would be deterred from taking an eye test is 3 million. That is the number who have been deterred from undergoing an eye test as a result of the charge. The Secretary of State appears surprised. That figure has been available from quarterly surveys since charges were introduced.

The figure of 3 million is one which we can quote with confidence because it has been prepared by Professor Hart, professor of statistics at Reading university, using two sources. The first was a survey by the Association of Optometrists, drawing on 400 branches, with data collected from those branches by the Economists Advisory Group. The second was a survey also based on data collected from 1,200 branches of multiples, with data collected by Touche Ross.

I stress that both surveys had a very large base, and were based on work by independent agencies, not professional organisations. The conclusion reached in those surveys, and by Professor Hart, is that, in the year to April 1990, the number of eye tests performed totalled 8·9 million, compared with a figure in the year to April 1989 of 13·2 million—a drop of more than 4 million.

I want to be fair to the Secretary of State. The figures are so dramatic that I can afford to be fair to him. I concede that, in the year to April 1989, probably an extra 1 million people underwent eye tests in anticipation of the introduction of charges. In fact, the Minister of State made a precise estimate of their number. He provided a figure to the Select Committee suggesting that 1·4 million tests were performed in 1987-88 in anticipation of charges and resulted in an unduly high figure for those years. I think that the figure of 1·4 million is rather high, but I shall not quibble. I concede every single one of them. Even if that number is deducted from the fall in the number of tests last year over the previous year, one is still left with a dramatic decline in eye tests of 2·9 million—effectively, a 3 million drop in the number of people going for an eye test last year.

One has to go back to 1981 to find a year in which the number of eye tests was that low. Effectively, the Government have wiped out a whole decade of advance in the eye service.

Mr. Neil Hamilton (Tatton): The line of argument that the hon. Gentleman is now adopting seems rather different from that which he used in the debate on the Health and Medicines Bill on 1 November 1988, when he said:

"I predict, with confidence, that the Secretary of State will not save that sum, for two reasons . . . Eye hospitals will be swamped by references from general practitioners who will no longer be able to refer their patients to optometrists for free examinations."—[*Official Report*, 1 November 1988; Vol. 142, c. 933.]

Can the hon. Gentleman say whether that has happened, and whether the difference in the two figures that he quoted is accounted for by that factor?

Mr. Cook: If the eye hospitals had received 3 million additional referrals for free examinations, I assure the hon. Gentleman that he would have spotted the queues in the street. My point is that since charges were introduced 3 million people have not undergone eye tests who would otherwise have done so. That is perfectly consistent with the fact that the number of people going to eye hospitals who previously would not have done so is significantly up. That increase will be matched by the reduction in the number of referrals of people with secondary symptoms who would obviously have been referred there by optometrists had they seen that large a number.

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): If the hon. Gentleman is going to rely on the surveys published so far, will he agree that he is relying heavily on surveys of opticians, who I have no doubt were trying to be helpful but who have a vested interest in the replies that they give? Is he also going to refer to the survey carried out by the Association of Optometrists using a MORI poll of the general public or to the Royal National Institute for the Blind survey of the public, which show that there is no apparent decrease in the number of tests carried out?

Mr. Cook: The survey carried out by the Royal National Institute for the Blind gave an estimated 2·7 million reduction, which is substantial—I am sorry to have to tell the Secretary of State that I have seen it and it shows precisely that reduction. I can assure him that I will be referring to the survey carried out by MORI because I believe that it is a prime part of his case.

I must pick up on the way that the Secretary of State has immediately sought to cast doubt on the figures that I gave because they came from opticians. I repeat that the statistics I quoted were derived by a professor of statistics, who is putting his scientific reputation on the line, from data collected by the Economists Advisory Group and by Touche Ross, the chartered accountants. The Secretary of State is suggesting that all those are part of a conspiracy to distort the figures. Is he telling the House that every one of those 400 independent optometrists and 1,200 branches of the multiples is part of a conspiracy to practise a statistical lie—that they are all together in a conspiracy to co-ordinate the same statistical lie?

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am pointing out that the figures that the hon. Gentleman has relied on, quite mistakenly, are all derived from independent opticians and multiple chains. Figures obtained from the general public—surveys of patients, including, contrary to what he has just asserted, questions asked by the Royal National Institute for the Blind—do not support his thesis.

Mr. Cook: Perhaps my naivety and innocence made me conclude that the people most likely to be able to assist us on the numbers of people coming forward for eye tests are the opticians who carry out such tests. If the Secretary of State is really telling the House—if he is, it will be badly received outside—that that scientific profession is capable of practising a lie for financial gain, I have a simple solution to offer him. In the past year, the profession has offered time and again to agree on a system of independent monitoring with the Secretary of State in which they could both participate. However, the Secretary of State has resisted and rebuffed every one of those overtures. There can be only one conclusion—it is perfectly simple—which is that the Secretary of State does not want their help to monitor the drop because he does not want to know how big the drop is.

Since the Secretary of State advises me to do so, I shall refer to the survey carried out by MORI on behalf of the Association of Optometrists. I assume that it is that survey, and the parallel survey which the Secretary of State has carried out, that have prompted the Government amendment to state that charges will not deter those who need sight tests from seeking them. I do not see where the "will" in the sentence comes from. It is not a question of what will happen in the future: as the Secretary of State knows, we have had a whole year of charges, and the evidence of deterrence is already there.

I understand that the Secretary of State has carried out a survey of his own, similar to the one that the Association of Optometrists commissioned from MORI. I presume that it is those data that the Secretary of State will deploy in his speech—a speech which his junior Minister yesterday assured the House would blow me out of the water. That would be an exhilarating experience, which I look forward to with excitement. The Secretary of State will have to find much more than the market research survey to which he has just referred if he is to succeed in blowing me out of the water.

Faced with the problem, the Government, typically, have opted for market research. Instead of going to the opticians for data, they have asked people in the street whether they can remember when they last had an eye test. The question that the Government have been asking is, "Have you had a sight test at an optician since Christmas?" The problem with that approach—to me, at least, it is a problem, although I suspect that the Secretary

[Mr. Cook]

of State sees it as a solution—is that it invites over-reporting. It is not just this year that the Association of Optometrists has carried out market research; it has carried out similar market research surveys in each of the last five years, which have resulted in an over-reporting of the number of eye tests by 15 to 25 per cent.

Knowing that he would be asked this question, the Secretary of State commissioned an identical survey from MORI, which put to a sample 1,000 people exactly the question that the Secretary of State devised for his survey: "Have you had a sight test at an optician since Christmas?" The result of the survey, if the answers were correct and if all those who said that they had been to an optician since Christmas had done so, would have been that, in the last financial year, there were not 9 million eye tests but 16 million eye tests.

The only problem that the profession would have had in the last financial year would have been to get all those coming in for an eye test to form orderly queues at the door. Such an approach merely tests popular perceptions; it does not test the reality of those who go to opticians for eye tests.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The hon. Gentleman says that a public survey will plainly lead to over-reporting. I am prepared to agree with him, as a matter of argument. He believes that in the past there has been over-reporting of between 15 and 25 per cent. Does the hon. Gentleman not realise that a 15 to 25 per cent. allowance can be made and that there will still be no fall in the number of eye tests? The hon. Gentleman's proposition is based on the absurd argument that, so long as one surveys only opticians, one can show that there has been a drop, but every time one surveys the public, one finds that there has been no drop in the number of eye tests. I prefer the second approach.

Mr. Cook: The House will have observed that the Secretary of State is backing himself into a position from which he is successfully protecting himself against any opportunity of obtaining the correct data. From the moment that he says that opticians cannot be included in the survey, he is precluded from finding out how many people are going to opticians.

Let me try to impress upon the Secretary of State the invitation that opticians have been making to him for a year. If he does not trust them, he is casting a major slur on a scientific profession by saying that they are prepared, in conspiracy with Touche Ross, the Economists Advisory Group and Professor Peter Hart, professor of statistics at Reading, to conceal the figures and deceive the House. If that is what he is saying, I invite him to nominate any independent body that he and the Association of Optometrists can together instruct to collect the data. That invitation has been made to the Secretary of State each month for the past year. I ask him again whether he has the courage to accept the challenge.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: There is absolutely nothing new to say in this tired old debate between the two sides, except to discuss these surveys. The hon. Gentleman says that we must go only to opticians for our information. He is unaware of any survey of the general public that shows any reduction at all in the number of eye tests. He has seen a survey of the general public which shows that there has been no reduction in demand, but he dismisses it by using the absurd argument that people do not remember correctly when they last had an eye test. Does he not accept that it is sensible to have a survey of the general public, or is he prepared to say that the only source of information on which he will rely is people with a professional, vested interest in the results?

Mr. Cook: Once again, the Secretary of State's most revealing comment was the last line—that because, as he perceives it, they have a vested interest, he is not prepared to believe what the opticians are saying to him. I find that a breathtaking slur which, by implication, would be applicable not just to optometrists, and could be used to rebut pretty well any medical research one cares to name, all of which is based on scientific research of people no doubt with a vested interest in promoting their own profession.

Over the years, the accountancy profession has developed modest and sometimes quite sophisticated tools for accounting the books. The accountancy profession, can, from time to time, detect fraud, particularly when that fraud is practised on the ginormous scale that the Secretary of State has alleged. I put it to the Secretary of State that all those optometrists who have been charging for eye tests for the past year have accounts and have to make annual returns. Will the Secretary of State accept any independent audit of their books to find out what has happened to their accounts and the numbers treated in the past year, or will he say that the accountants also cannot be trusted because they have some vested interest? It is perfectly clear that the Secretary of State is determined on one point—he will not ask the optometrists how many they are treating, because he dare not do so.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): Is it not also true that, if the ophthalmic opticians and the medical practitioners are faking their books, that is a matter of fraud for the Inland Revenue?

Mr. Cook: I wholly agree with the hon. Lady, who has first-hand knowledge on which to make that assertion. There is a way in which the Secretary of State could assist the hon. Lady and myself. He could repeat his allegations outside the cloak of privilege. Were he to go public and assert that those 400 optometrists who made returns were seeking to practise fraud on the public, on the Department and on the House, the courts might take a considerable interest in the matter.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have at no stage made any such allegation—[HON. MEMBERS: "Yes, you have."] The hon. Gentleman has such a narrow statistical base for his case that every time I doubt it, he keeps trying to say that I am accusing people of fraud. Obviously, different practices fare to different extents. Some of the multiples have lost out rather badly to independents in the curious market of the past year. All I am saying, and the hon. Gentleman has not denied it, is that nobody has carried out a survey of the general public which shows any fall in demand whatsoever. The hon. Gentleman's entire case is a palpable myth and he should confess that he has based it on an inadequate and narrow survey and allow the House to spend its time on a more serious subject.

Mr. Cook: I am sorry to detain the House so long on the matter, but the Secretary of State has intervened five times to make exactly the same point. Quite patently, he rests his entire defence on his belief, which I am sorry to

assure him is mistaken, that market research has revealed no reduction in the number of those coming forward for eye tests.

I have two responses. First, the figures that I am quoting are not on a narrow base. They include one third of all the multiple branches and more than 10 per cent. of independent optometrists. That is a perfectly adequate large base. Secondly, it is not the case that all market research shows no reduction. I have here an RNIB survey and an RNIB press release. The first paragraph of that press release states that the survey indicates that about 2·25 million people have not taken sight tests in the past 12 months because they would have had to pay.

The very research that the Secretary of State is asking us to believe shows exactly the deterrent effect to which I have referred. The press release goes on to say, as we would expect, that the very people who are most deterred are those on lower incomes. That market research which the Secretary of State is prepared to believe—the Secretary of State will no doubt accept it—will show that those on lower incomes are twice as likely to be deterred and that those on the lowest incomes are three times as likely to be deterred.

The Government's amendment invites the House to congratulate the Government on its policy that

"sight tests paid for by the National Health Service should continue to be available to those on low income".

There are two reasons why that assurance should not persuade the House. First, there is the problem which is familiar with mean-tested benefits and which makes entirely predictable the result when applied to eye tests. Many of those who qualify do not know that they qualify and therefore never come forward to claim the benefits. Secondly, the means test used is a mean means test. It is the same means test that is used to test entitlement for free prescriptions. Anyone with an income that is £10 or £15 above income support levels will be excluded. Anyone with an income of £60 a week is unlikely to qualify for help with eye tests.

To find out whether he or she qualifies, a person must first wade his or her way through form AG1, which comes in 17 pages and 19 parts. One will need good eyesight to get through it in the first place. I was recently sent a form by the Halifax building society inviting me to apply for a £5,000 loan. The form sent to test my entitlement ran to two pages, not 17. At the bottom there was an invitation to phone Tamsin if I had difficulty in filling in the form, and there was a photograph of Tamsin with her headphones on and plugged in, smiling and eager to respond to my queries.

There is no Tamsin to help a person to read the 17 pages of AG1. Moreover, the first thing one reads at the top of the form is the reference to help with NHS charges and the cost of travel to hospital or to visit someone in prison. I have challenged that unfortunate opening statement before and have suggested that the Departments of Health and of Social Security should revise this opening gambit. The only change is that the reference to visiting someone in prison now appears in even bolder type. Thousands of pensioners who are confronted with that opening line will go no further. They are precisely the people whom we should be encouraging to come forward for an eye test and precisely the people whose eyesight may be deteriorating.

The medical consequences of those people being deterred and not coming forward can be predicted accurately from the figures prepared by the British College of Optometrists—not a trade organisation but the scientific and examining body for the profession. The college has prepared figures on the expected referrals from eye tests, from which we can predict the reduction in the number of referrals that is likely to result from a reduction of 3 million in the number of eye tests.

The number of referrals for medical examination will fall by 160,000 cases. Those are the people with disturbing symptoms who are now being missed, members of the public who are unaware that their sight and perhaps health are at risk. Using the figures prepared by the college, we can predict their conditions. Among the 160,000 cases, there will be 26,000 cases of cataracts, probably 25,000 cases of glaucoma, 9,000 cases of macular degeneration, 11,000 cases of hypertension and 13,000 cases of diabetes.

I come to the final absurdity. If only a third of those who are putting their sight at risk fail to come forward in time to avert blindness, the cost to the Government of supporting them will be about £50 million a year. I regret that I have expressed this personal tragedy as a cash figure, but I am trying to find an argument that can connect with the Treasury argument.

What savings do the Government expect from charges for eye tests? The answer is £90 million. That saving would be halved by the cost of those who may go blind as a result of being deterred in one year from coming forward. Those savings will be wiped out in two years. The Government's amendment invites us to congratulate them on having made economies by introducing charges for eye tests, but there are no savings from those charges; there will only be in the longer run extra costs to the health budget for coping with those whose condition is not detected.

Why did the Government get it so wrong? For the answer to that, we need look no further than the speech made by the Secretary of State in November 1988. When Opposition Members and even some Conservative Back Benchers told him that optometrists warned that they would be obliged to charge more than £10 for tests, the Secretary of State said that he did not believe that. He went on to say:

"the charge for the eye test will steadily disappear, that is my strong personal opinion."—[*Official Report*, 1 November 1988; Vol. 139, c. 927]

Quite why the Secretary of State imagined that optometrists would offer a free eye test once he had stopped paying them is a mystery that he did not explain to the House. The income to the optometrists' profession from test fees is equivalent to the entire profits of the profession. How they were expected to absorb such a major loss is a mystery, the answer to which the Secretary of State did not share with the House.

A year after the introduction of charges for tests, the average charge is £12. A common charge is £15, and a charge of £30 has been recorded. When I challenged the Secretary of State six months ago to produce an optometrist who was providing an eye test free of charge, he cited an optometrist in Dover. On inquiry, all was not what it seemed in Dover. The optometrist there offered a free eye test only if someone bought a pair of spectacles after the test. If someone simply wanted an eye test, he had to pay for it.

I do not deny that it is possible to find the odd isolated case of an optometrist who provides a free eye test. However, those cases are so few as to be of curiosity value. There is not the slightest evidence that, by their competition, optometrists in Dover or anywhere else are

[Mr. Cook]

having the slightest effect on the market price of tests in the big cities. On the contrary, the quarterly surveys of the Association of Optometrists showed that the price charged over the past year has tended to increase, not decrease.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): With regard to the £12 charge, we should get the figures into perspective. Will the hon. Member comment on the family expenditure survey for 1988, which shows that the average family spends £13·64 a week on tobacco and alcohol? In that context, is £12 every two years a large sum of money for a test? Is not the hon. Gentleman insulting the British public when he suggests that £12 will deter them from looking after their health?

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): That was a Labour gain.

Mr. Cook: I am grateful for the intervention made by the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett), which my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) very astutely described as a Labour gain.

The hon. Member for Pembroke has illuminated the mists of ignorance and darkness with which we are trying to reason. We are not discussing the average family. Two thirds of those who visit optometrists do not constitute average families. They are pensioners, and four fifths of pensioners have incomes below £98 a week. We are concerned with people who must find £12 or £15 from a weekly income of perhaps £60, £70, £80 or even £90. While £12 or £15 might be a small sum to the hon. Member for Pembroke, it is not a small sum for that four fifths of pensioners. It is a tragedy for those pensioners that they find the conduct of the social policy of their nation in the hands of people who cannot comprehend what it is like to live on that sum of money.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett *rose*——

Mr. Cook: No, I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman again. He had his chance. I will not give him another opportunity to destroy the Secretary of State's case.

I have one question above all others to which I should like the Secretary of State to reply. Is it still his strong opinion that the eye test charge will steadily disappear? Also, is he still prepared to tell the House that charges of £12 by independent optometrists and of £11·20 in Boots and in Dollond and Aitchisons, which have survived over the past year, will steadily disappear? If so, when will they disappear? How long must we wait until the market works its miracle?

I pause to reflect on the wider lessons to be drawn from the fact that the Secretary of State has been so spectacularly wrong in his predictions to the House. Those predictions were based on the same dogma on which he rests his dramatic proposals for the rest of the Health Service. In 1988 he promised that, by introducing the market, there would be greater efficiency, because competition would drive down prices and widen choice. What has actually happened in the eye service is that the introduction of the market has increased the price and dramatically reduced productivity. It has also reduced the choice available to the public, because 250 branches of independent optometrists have closed.

I noted last month in Ellesmere that an optometrist business that had been operating since 1897 and had survived two world wars and a depression has been driven out of business by the first 18 months of this Secretary of State. Now the public of Ellesmere, if they wish to visit an optometrist, must travel to Oswestry.

The lessons are clear—they are revealing. Competition in health care, in the case of the eye service, has resulted in higher prices, a reduction in the numbers treated, and a reduction in the number of places at which to be treated. Heaven help the Secretary of State if, next April, his new market in hospital care has exactly the same results for the public.

The difference between the two Front Benches is neatly expressed in a letter from the recent junior Minister at the Department of Health who has now departed to the Department of Transport—a man for whom I had high regard until yesterday, when I discovered whom he had appointed as his Parliamentary Private Secretary. I therefore have no compunction about quoting the letter that he wrote to optometrists, in which he himself made the remarkably revealing observation:

> "The Government does not have a policy regarding the price of private sight test fees. Private sight tests are commercial transactions between the optician and his or her patient.
>
> I hope this clarifies the situation."

It certainly clarifies it. I regard it as an appalling statement by any Health Minister that his Government have no policy on the cost of an eye test. I cannot accept that that important matter of health policy should be left as a commercial transaction. It should be one of the first priorities of health policy that anyone who needs an eye test should be able to get one irrespective of whether he or she can afford the commercial transaction.

In a spirit of charity, I put to the Secretary of State the thought that we all make mistakes. I have made mistakes in my time—one day when we are both retired, I shall tell him what they were. The Secretary of State can be forgiven for being wrong, but he cannot be forgiven for stubbornly refusing to face up to the fact that he has been wrong. Those who loudly deny their mistakes do not prove the strength of their convictions; they only establish their lack of courage.

I have an example for the Government. The state of Alberta also ended free eye tests in July 1987. Twelve months later, it was found that there had been a 30 per cent. fall in the number of eye tests—a perfect parallel with our experience, but there the parallels diverge. The state Government of Alberta had the sense to recognise reality and the courage to recognise that they were wrong. They brought back the free eye test.

It is now the Secretary of State's turn. I wait to hear whether he has the same good sense and the same courage to restore the free eye test that he took away 18 months ago. In the event that he is unable to do so, I end my remarks by correcting yet another of the mistakes in that speech of November 1988. At the end of his speech, the Secretary of State said:

> "I do not believe that any future Labour Government will withdraw this charge".—[*Official Report*, 1 November 1988; Vol. 139, c. 930.]

He was wrong again. It will be one of the first priorities of the next Labour Government to abolish charges for eye tests and to ensure that no one is deterred from getting an eye test because he or she cannot afford it.

4.18 pm

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"supports the Government in its view that those who can afford to pay for sight tests should do so and that the money which was previously spent by the National Health Service on free sight tests for those who could afford to pay is better spent in other ways in improving health care; believes that this will not lead to the nation's health or sight being put at risk nor deter those from seeking sight tests who need them; and fully supports the Government's policy that sight tests paid for by the National Health Service should continue to be available to those on low income, children and those most at risk of blindness from diabetes and glaucoma.".

Care of the eyes is an extremely important part of any health care system and it is important that we do our utmost to ensure that we maintain a high standard of optical services and give everybody the service that they require to protect themselves against glaucoma and the consequences of diabetes, and to preserve good eyesight. That remains the Government's intention, and will be so.

However, with the greatest respect, that argument is stale. It relates to the extent to which we should allow opticians to charge for the eye test that is made before spectacles are dispensed to people who are not in the exempt category and entitled to National Health Service spectacles. The argument is merely a re-run of one that we had last year. Since then there has been no evidence to change the position that I have described. It is a serious mistake for the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) to rely so heavily on that point when, for example, committing a future Labour Government—if we should have one—to spending money on this subject. That is a serious misjudgment of priorities which, if ever carried out, would not serve any worthwhile health purpose.

I begin by reminding the House of the effect of the Government's changes. We continued to pay for the eye test for about one third of the population. The major exempt categories were those on low incomes, children, and people susceptible to certain diseases. The remaining two thirds of the population are no longer entitled to go to an optician for an eye test for which the NHS will pay a fee.

The effect of that change was obviously uncomfortable for opticians. When I refer to their vested interest, I am not referring to an illegitimate vested interest—like the rest of us, they are entitled to lobby from time to time in the interest of their cause. However, our change has put the opticians—the multiple chains and the independents—in the position of deciding whether to charge people who are no longer entitled to an NHS sight test and, if so, how much to charge them. We have now had a year of that so we can see where we are when discussing the possible consequences of the change.

I accept that any reputable optician will prefer the previous system—if I were an optician, I expect that I would. Opticians used to have little cards in the window which read "NHS sight tests free to all." That was a perfectly proper, not unprofessional attraction to people to go in and contemplate buying spectacles. It meant that the optician had a guaranteed income from the public purse for every test carried out, at a fee set by the National Health Service and not, therefore, subject to competition for patients among the different outlets. The change has meant that each optician now has to decide whether, and to what extent, to charge. Opticians no longer have those little cards in the window——

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston) *rose*——

Mr. Clarke: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment.

A variety of charges has been imposed. I accept that the average is roughly that which the hon. Member for Livingston described. The hon. Gentleman conceded, fairly, that some opticians are offering the sight test free. I cite Duncan and Todd, Hendrys and Lannies. There are other examples across the country——

Mr. Robin Cook: As the Secretary of State has specifically mentioned Duncan and Todd, I remind him and place on record the fact that Duncan and Todd introduced the free eye test in Scotland after writing to me to seek an assurance that the next Labour Government will abolish the charge for the eye test, on the basis that it could afford the experiment only until the next general election. If the Secretary of State is citing Duncan and Todd, he should remember that the free eye test will not survive the election unless a Labour Government are elected.

Mr. Clarke: That shows that those opticians are worried about weakening the effect of the opticians' lobby on the Labour party. With the greatest respect, the hon. Gentleman's approach to this issue is extremely naive—which is unusual for him. I recommend that he reads the optical press of 12 months ago when the change was made, when many opticians were contemplating much lower charges and free tests. Immense pressure was brought to bear on opticians. I remember a letter that urged them not to play the Government's game. The hon. Gentleman obviously thinks that it is a coincidence that opticians are still charging roughly the same as the NHS fee, except in the cases that I have cited, where free eye tests have already been introduced. Many opticians regard charging the patients who come into their practice less than others legitimately think to be the going rate for carrying out that work to be somehow letting the side down.

Mr. Loyden: When the Secretary of State evaluates the benefits of free eye tests, he seems to ignore the fact that they are very much a part of preventive medicine. Indeed, as one who has experienced being diagnosed as suffering from glaucoma by an optician, I am convinced that that aspect of the eye test is vital. The Secretary of State appears to overlook that completely.

Mr. Clarke: No. I acknowledge it. I urge everyone to have a regular eye test if there is any reason to believe that they need one. I accept that some diseases can be detected by eye tests. We are arguing about whether it is wrong for people outside the exempt categories to pay—most of them—about £10 to £11 once every two years for an important part of their health care. We are debating the consequences of most opticians having decided in practice to continue to charge a fee such as I have described.

I shall respond to the challenge put to me about when competition will become more widespread. I think that it will become more widespread if the Labour party stops supporting the campaign for free eye tests. Opticians are travelling in hope that sooner or later there will be a Government who will give them back the assured income

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without competition that they used to have. They are extremely reluctant to allow a competitive market to break out when Her Majesty's official Opposition promises, as far as I can see, no explicit extra expenditure on the Health Service except in this unlikely area and on dental checks, which are about the only items of NHS spending to which the Labour party is committed.

I have studied the policy document of the hon. Member for Livingston and I seriously believe that the Labour party is in difficulties. The party is almost bereft of any health policy and is in danger of giving way to professional and sometimes even commercial lobbying when choosing its priorities.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): Listening to the Secretary of State on this point, I am reminded of a gentleman whom I and the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) came across last night at a public meeting on health. He was a Conservative-appointed general manager who was talking about NHS consultants in a health debate in a different context. Precisely the same thing struck both the hon. Gentleman and me last night as probably strikes the hon. Gentleman about the Secretary of State now. Cannot the Secretary of State realise that, at least in health, and in many other areas of social policy, too, professionals sometimes react to events and seek assurances out of not commercial self-interest but general care about health standards and their patients? Will he acknowledge that for once, instead of accusing experts or professional groups within the Health Service of commercial, mean-minded motives every time they seek to disagree with him when the best interests of preventive health care and preventive medicine might be their priority?

Mr. Clarke: I do not regard accusing people of having, among other things, commercial motives as necessarily a wicked attack on them. Of course, opticians are skilled professional people upon whose care we all depend. Their prime motive is the care of their patients. But by and large spectacles and eye tests in Britain are provided by commercial chains and organisations as well as independent practices. Outfits such as Dollond and Aitchison and Boots Opticians, with which I have had some contact in my constituency, are perfectly legitimate commercial organisations which have a wholly respectable but commercial interest in the outcome of this discussion.

We should all be worried about—indeed, I believe that we all have the same genuine concern, and that the hon. Member for Livingston is mistaken in choosing this cause for that reason—the consequence for health care and preventive medicine to which the hon. Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden) referred. That is where we must turn to surveys. The whole case of the Opposition that we are threatening the eye care of the nation is based on the proposition that the ending of NHS tests for two thirds of the population led to a reduction in the number of eye tests. I shall seek to demonstrate that that is untrue. There is no evidence to support it. It is wrong. The Opposition's case is based on a total myth.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Will my right hon. and learned Friend also tell the House how much revenue comes from the charges and what would be the impact of their abolition on, for example, the number of hip replacement operations?

Mr. Clarke: The cost of restoring free NHS eye tests to two thirds of the population—including everyone in this Chamber who at present faces the wicked burden of paying £10 for an eye test—would be £90 million. The Labour party wants to spend more than the entire budget of a reasonable-sized, English district health authority on giving everyone in this Chamber a free eye test. That is an absurd choice of priorities, considering all the demands that come piling in on the NHS. It is urged because it is said that the number of people having eye tests has fallen since charges were introduced, but that is not the case.

There have been various surveys. The hon. Member for Livingston correctly cited the surveys that are based on information collected from some, but not all, opticians. I do not doubt the bona fides of those who collected it, but the figures are derived from a section of the profession and some of the chains. I suspect that the tendency to respond to surveys is strongest for opticians who lost out in the extremely turbulent market which was created over the past 18 months.

I believe that the profession and some of the chains created that turbulent market. It was also unavoidable. We had a controversial debate about the change. It was flagged up all over the place that charges were to be introduced in April 1989, with the result that a huge number of people were attracted to come for a free eye test while it lasted. Those who campaigned against us while we were contemplating the changes did not point out that many people would continue to be exempt. As we all know and as the profession concedes, the result was a huge increase in the number of people who had their eyes tested before April 1989. The obvious result was a huge drop in the number of people who had their eyes tested thereafter, if only in the short term. A wave effect was created. I remember that some branches of Dollond and Aitchison stayed open till midnight in the last few days while free eye tests were available to encourage people to rush in. As a result, the first quarter of 1989 saw a big increase in the number of tests while the next quarter saw a big decrease.

Some practices were hit by that. It depended on the business acumen and position of those involved. Clearly, if the market is so transformed in the short term, some businesses lose out, some prosper and others are bought up by chains. Considerable turbulence was created in the market, partly by our changes, but greatly aggravated by the reaction of the profession in response to them. Now, after an interval, attempts are being made to establish the level of demand for eye tests as we return to normality.

The hon. Gentleman relies wholly on figures obtained from some opticians which, I am sure, have been subjected to expert analysis. He has ignored the surveys of the public. It is no good saying that it is all market research. If one wants to discover how many people are having their eyes tested, the only way to produce a reliable estimate is to take an independent sample of the public.

The Royal National Institute for the Blind carried out one survey, but the hon. Gentleman did not appear to have read beyond its press release. It carried out a telephone survey of a small sample. The first question was:

"Have you paid for a sight test in the last 12 months?"

That question is not referred to in the press release because the answer made it clear that there was no apparent

reduction in the number of people whom one would expect to give the affirmative answer. The RNIB then further questioned those people who said that they had not paid for an eye test in a series of leading questions about why they had not had a sight test. Most people who do not have an eye rest usually do not have one because they have not thought about it. I have had an eye test in the past 12 months, but in the past when I have not, that has been why. The questions heavily suggested that cost was a reason for not having a test. Yet the survey shows that the number who said that they had had an eye test was in line with past trends.

The other survey—which has already been mentioned—was carried out for the Association of Optometrists by MORI. No doubt trying to anticipate the results of our survey, the association had asked MORI to carry out a survey using similar methods, asking people whether they had been given a sight test by the optician—not the hospital or the doctor—since Christmas. Then, like the hon. Member for Livingston, it tried to ridicule the results.

I regret to say that the MORI poll showed that, if anything, the number of people who had had sight tests had gone up since the charges were introduced. Ten per cent. of those polled—equivalent to more than 4 million people—said that they had had a sight test since Christmas. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that that is a startling figure; he is probably right when he says that there was over-reporting, and that we must take off 15 or 25 per cent. to obtain an accurate figure. However, what he did not add was that the figure is so high that, even if that were done, there would still be no apparent drop in the number of people who had had eye tests.

The Association of Optometrists tried to dismiss the results of what was the best survey so far carried out. It said:

> "The Association of Optometrists believe that the phrase 'since Christmas' is very loose. Christmas conjures up memories of the festive season, which for most people starts in November."

I do not think that most people think that Christmas is in November. When testing the recollection of the general public, it is best to choose some occasion that they may remember, and the phrase "since Christmas" is probably the best way of prompting memory: most people remember what they did before and after Christmas. The idea that "since Christmas" could be thought to include November is—with the greatest respect—a fatuous attempt to discredit the evidence. Even if people's recollections are incorrect and a proportion of respondents are discounted, there is still no evidence of any decline in demand.

Mr. Kennedy: As the Secretary of State has quoted the Association of Optometrists directly, will he do two things? First, will he note that the views with which he takes issue were not obtained by means of amateurish opinion polling, but have been verified by MORI—I hope that he would agree that MORI probably knows more about opinion polling than any of us—and the Association of Optometrists? Secondly, will he respond to another point in the press release to which he referred? The Association of Optometrists and MORI argue that, to focus the question directly, the phrase should have been "since December 31". What does the right hon. and learned Gentleman think?

Mr. Clarke: I have not yet had a chance to contact Bob Worcester of MORI to ask whether he agrees with the phrase "since November". As for the second part of the hon. Gentleman's question, asking people to remember whether something happened after 31 December is less likely to produce an accurate answer than asking them about what happened "since Christmas". Most of us cannot remember exact months or dates. Even if we allow for over-reporting, the survey does not demonstrate any evidence of a reduction in the number of sight tests; quite the reverse.

Mr. Michael: As the Secretary of State seems to be spending all his speech denigrating those who have sought to reach the truth, will he in the next few minutes give any fresh information that he has perhaps sought himself?

Mr. Clarke: It will be my pleasure to do so. The Government—fulfilling an undertaking that was given when the original Bill was being discussed—have carried out their own survey, which we delayed until the market had settled down and the wave effect had shown some signs of coming out.

We asked NOP to conduct a survey on behalf of the Department into the number of NHS and private sight tests during the first three months of this year. We released the results of that survey today and the details have been placed in the Library. Five sets of surveys were carried out in March and in April and 10,000 adults responded to the NOP questions. It is quite the best sample survey to have been carried out so far and it is adequate for any statistical purposes. The results have been made available together with wholly independent comment on the surveys by the Government statistical service.

The survey asked whether a person had had a sight test since Christmas and, on the basis of the response to that question, some 5 million people had their sight tested in the first three months of this year. That is a startlingly high result. If one extrapolated from previous trends up to 1987, only 3·5 million people should have had their eyes tested in that time. The result implies a substantial increase in the number of people having eye tests compared with the years up to 1989.

The results of the survey are startlingly high. Almost certainly it contained an element of over-reporting and therefore one must discount the results to some extent. The hon. Member for Livingston said that there had been between 15 and 25 per cent. over-reporting and attempted to demonstrate that that rubbished the MORI poll. I pointed out that even that level of over-reporting does not rubbish the poll as it still gets one back to the trend in the number of eye tests that existed before 1987.

If one discounts the figures in the NOP poll by 15 per cent. it still means there has been a great increase in the number of people having sight tests. If one makes the ludicrous assumption that half the people involved in the survey were wrong about when they had their sight test, one still gets back to the trend that existed before 1987. On any view the survey shows that the number of sight tests in the first three months of the year is at least well in line with the increases in the 10 years to 1987.

The past 15 months have been entirely consistent with what any reasonable person might have expected. Before the changes were introduced there was a rush and an abnormally high number of people had a sight test in the first three months of 1989. There was then an inevitable

[Mr. Clarke]

dip, after which the number of sight tests has recovered to its former normal level. I intervened in the speech of the hon. Member for Livingston to say that I did not believe that he has a shred of evidence to contradict the surveys that have been carried out. To date three surveys have been conducted and they all show that the number of sight tests undertaken remain about the same. The hon. Gentleman's case is based on an absurd mistake in response to lobbying from the profession.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Minister said that the documents relating to the NOP survey are in the Library. I went there because I wanted to have a look at that survey, but it is not available.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You were not in the Chair at the beginning of the debate, but had you been, you would have seen the Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Secretary of State scurrying round the Chamber handing out the documents to a number of Conservative Members. Could it be that those documents include the report on the NOP poll to which the Secretary of State referred? If so, information is being given to Conservative Members which has been denied to the rest of the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I deprecate hon. Members scurrying round the Chamber slipping out pieces of paper, but I have no knowledge of their contents —they might have been betting slips for all I know. I am sure that the Secretary of State is ready to comment on the point made by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell).

Mr. Clarke: One hundred copies of the report are available in the Vote Office. My advisers intended to place them there at the end of my speech, but they will put them there now if hon. Members want that.

Mr. Michael: Let us have a look at them.

Mr. Clarke: I do not mind that. The hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to speak later and I shall look forward to hearing how he can dismiss the evidence of three public surveys to show that there has been no fall in demand. Presumably he will say that he prefers the returns from 10 per cent. of opticians. I shall greatly look forward to hearing what the hon. Gentleman has to say.

It is total nonsense to keep asserting that people are not having eye tests, but that is the basis upon which the Labour party is committed to spending £90 million of public money, for no worthwhile health advantage.

Mr. Robin Cook: The Secretary of State has repeatedly said that we have produced no evidence, but he knows perfectly well that we have produced voluminous evidence collected by people of impeccable independence and with statistical experience. He chooses to say that all that evidence is worthless because it stems from optometrists, all of whom are in a grand conspiracy to distort the figures. I have produced figures from 1,600 outlets of optometrists who carry out eye tests and they consistently report a decline in demand. As the right hon. and learned Gentleman has waved aside all those 1,600, can he produce a single optometrist whom he has consulted and a single set of figures from any batch that he can reconcile with the wholly incredible results of his opinion polls?

Mr. Clarke: I have already dealt with the evidence, upon which the hon. Gentleman is relying, that comes from some sections of the profession which have responded to the poll. The hon. Gentleman is rendered speechless by the accounts I have given of the surveys— two of which he knew about—of the public which show that there is no evidence to support his case. The hon. Gentleman has again repeated his commitment that a future Labour Government will spend £90 million on eye tests. In terms of the NHS that sum is a staggering resource as it greatly exceeds the total budget of many district health authorities.

The NHS is well financed now—better than it has ever been—and I expect more to be spent on it. If I had £90 million more at my disposal eye tests would not figure on the first several pages of my priorities for expenditure. The hon. Gentleman has a problem because he cannot get his colleagues to agree to a commitment to spend more on the NHS. The shadow Treasury team is to be congratulated for showing common sense. I do not normally congratulate them, but they realise that following a period when cash spending has gone up by 20 per cent. in two years it is not possible for any Government of any party to contemplate increasing spending at a faster rate than that.

The hon. Member for Livingston has been trying to wriggle out of that problem and I think that he has been in trouble with his colleagues from time to time. Until recently he kept on trotting out a figure of £3 billion that might be produced during the lifetime of a Parliament. Obviously he has lost that argument because when one looks at the Labour party policy document no figure of any kind appears. There is a vague reference to underfunding, but it might take more than the lifetime of a Parliament to put that right. The Labour party is not promising to spend more on health. With the greatest respect to the hon. Gentleman, all that he manages to get in a vague, short and lightweight passage on health is a promise to restore free eye tests and free dental checks. That represents an astonishing set of priorities. I should imagine that the hon. Gentleman got that past his Treasury colleagues with his argument that one can save about £50 million by restoring the free eye test. This afternoon we have exposed that argument as wrong. On that occasion the shadow Treasury team showed a lapse in concentration.

There is no evidence to suggest that the restoration of free eye tests would increase the number of tests undertaken. Therefore, one would increase the number of tests undertaken. Therefore, one would not detect any disease quicker and there would be no saving to hospitals, but that is the argument that the hon. Gentleman appears to have swung across his hon. Friends when drafting the policy document. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will go away and decide whether it is wise for the one and only spending commitment of the Labour party to be devoted to saving £11 every two years for at least a comparatively better-off section of society.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: The commitment given by the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) is in direct contradiction to the statement of the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) a couple of months ago that

there were only two spending commitments by the Labour party, and the restoration of free eye tests was not one of them. Surely this is just like the promise to abolish prescription charges in 1965; those charges were abolished in 1965, but they were brought back in 1968 and were set 25 per cent. higher than in 1965.

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for reminding me of the speech of the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett). If my hon. Friend continues to scrutinise the speeches of Labour's Treasury spokesmen, he will see that they do not mention health at all. There is no commitment by the Labour party because it would not be possible to exceed our spending plans. The hon. Member for Derby, South must have had a momentary lapse when she allowed this commitment to pass. I hope that when she sees the results of the various surveys she will reconsider her position.

Our priorities are to make a better National Health Service, to expand services generally and to devote money to the cause of better patient care, including eye care. Labour's campaign is stale. It is based on a false premise and should be abandoned. Now that we have become used to free eye tests only for those who need the support of the Government, any sensible level of priority should tell us that that is where we should leave the matter.

4.52 pm

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Durham): I propose to be brief and mainly to confine my remarks to my constituency. Charging for sight tests has placed a financial restriction on public access to a primary health measure. The imposition of the charge has deterred people from taking early steps in perhaps preventing the need for more treatment later and in the early detection of more serious conditions such as hypertension, one of the most common predisposing causes of a stroke, and glaucoma, which is a potentially blinding disease but often treatable. We are told that prevention is better than cure, but paying for access to preventive health care has deterred many and they run the risk of having treatable medical conditions go undetected at an early stage.

I carried out a survey, but perhaps I should have gone to dentists and asked them for information because what the Secretary of State said suggested that information given by opticians cannot be trusted. I went to opticians in Durham and carried out a small survey. I found that at its worst 60 per cent. fewer people were attending for eye examinations than in the year before the charges were introduced. Most disturbingly, the figure proved to be higher for old-age pensioners, especially for those who were not in receipt of income support. Those people have had their right to a free eye test withdrawn and are most likely to suffer the consequences of developing sight-threatening conditions through being discouraged from attending for routine eye examinations. To discourage such people is monstrous, given that many sight-threatening conditions are treatable after early detection.

The Secretary of State does not seem to take any notice of or accept any information supplied by opticians. Letters that I have received from opticians in my constituency show that they are deeply worried. I wrote to every optician in my constituency and they all expressed misgivings. A Mr. Grundy, who has two practices in my constituency, wrote to me saying:

> "I am very concerned that because these people are now discouraged from attending for routine eye examinations by charges, they are at much greater risk of developing sight threatening conditions which would in the past have been prevented by early detection and treatment."

I accept that the Secretary of State does not place much credence in that, because it is only a letter from an optician, but it is a damning comment on the situation.

Figures from a practice in my constituency show that 170 old-age pensioners who were not in receipt of income support attended for eye tests in the three months leading up to the introduction of charges. In the three months after the introduction of charges the number had dropped to 63. Even taking into account the distortion of the statistics caused by people rushing to get a free eye test before the charges were introduced, there is undoubtedly a marked drop in that practice's normal testing figures.

A worrying aspect of the survey was that a large proportion of the missing numbers were people who received income support but apparently did not realise that they were entitled to a free eye examination. Obviously, that can be serious for pensioners. At one practice the number of old-age pensioners receiving income support had dropped from 86 in the months leading up to charging to 56 after the introduction of charges. I was told by another practice that the receptionist was spending a great deal of her time trying to allay the fears of worried pensioners who did not know their entitlement and for whom the £11·20 is far beyond their means. Unfortunately, only a proportion of those worried pensioners found that they could have a free sight test. The rest, those not in receipt of income support but nevertheless without the means to pay, had to face the decision that they would have to do without the much-needed sight test.

Mr. Keith Bradley (Manchester, Withington): I carried out a similar survey in my constituency and it produced exactly the same results. It showed a reduction of up to 30 per cent. in the number of people going for eye tests. The Secretary of State does not accept the evidence of opticians, but one optician referred to me the case of an 83-year-old woman who thought that she was not entitled to a free eye test. When she realised that she was, the optician examined her and found a tumour in her eye. She was referred to the eye hospital in Manchester and was told that the tumour was so large, because of the delay in having the eye test, that she would probably have to have the eye removed. Is that the sort of health care that we can expect from the Government? Pensioners are scared to go for eye tests because they cannot afford the cost.

Mr. Steinberg: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention. He gives an example of what can happen if an old-age pensioner or anybody else does not get an eye test in time. There are hundreds of such cases throughout the country, and unless the Government recognise what is happening such stories will become all too familiar.

The figures that I have quoted cover the six months from January to June 1989. When the figures are broken down month by month, it is seen that, in the months before charging, the average number of pensioners attending for routine eye tests ranged from 11 to 29. In April, the month in which charges were introduced, the number attending fell to just one or two pensioners. That was true for every practice that supplied me with information. In the following months of May and June, the figure rose to an

[Mr. Steinberg]

average of six or seven. While the initial refusal or inability to pay for sight tests waned slightly, the fact remains that the number of people attending for sight tests has halved. The situation today has hardly improved.

It is an inescapable fact that a sizeable proportion of people, mainly pensioners, no longer attend their optician for a routine eye test. There is no doubt among opticians with whom I have been in contact that there has been no improvement in the past 12 months. While charges remain and while pensioners have to set aside part of their income for the poll tax, there will not be a full return to the pre-April 1989 figures. If nothing else, the Government must consider making all pensioners exempt. Out of a small income, pensioners cannot pay their proportion of the poll tax and pay for a sight test. They will have to make a choice and, as they have to pay the poll tax, they will have to do without the sight test.

Mr. Grundy told me that one of his practices used to rely entirely on pensioners. Now he does not see one pensioner at the practice and has had to reduce the opening times to two days a week. Regular patients at that practice no longer attend, and he attributes the loss purely to the charge for eye tests.

So that I cannot be accused of distorting the statistics by quoting figures for the three months before charging was introduced, I shall quote figures given to me yesterday by Mr. Grundy which leave no doubt about the destructive nature of the charge for eye tests. In January 1988 and January 1989, before the charge was introduced, there were 108 and 118 sight tests respectively. In January 1990, after the charge was introduced, there were 80 sight tests. In February 1988 and February 1989, the figures were 120 and 112 respectively and in February 1990 the number was 68. In March 1988 and March 1989, the figures were 102 and 135 respectively, while in March 1990 the total had dropped to 77.

The figures speak for themselves. In each instance there has been a monthly reduction of between 40 and 60 sight tests following the introduction of charges. That is proof, if proof were needed, of inability and reluctance to pay for a service which should never have been costed. In my constituency—I am sure that it is not unique—there has been a 30 per cent. fall in the number of sight tests. Primary health care is all about prevention and it is imperative that people and prevention are put before pounds.

It is clear from my research and the evidence that has been given to me that the eye-test charge has had a serious effect on the number of people attending opticians. The argument used by some Conservative Members, including the Secretary of State—I remember clearly the occasion on which he first advanced it—was that market forces would result in so much competition between opticians that charges would be eliminated. That has not happened yet and we wait for evidence that it will. In effect, opticians got together and set the charge for their area. That is not meant to be a criticism of opticians. It is a matter of fact and a natural thing for them to do. They had to do it because there was no alternative.

The criticism must be directed to where the blame lies, and that is with the Secretary of State and the Government generally. There can be no justification for charging for a primary health care measure, especially for one which is able to detect serious medical conditions at an early stage. It is an especially important test. Even in terms of the Government's philosophy, the charges are not cost effective. It can be said only that the charge is vindictive and that it hits old people in particular. It should be abolished forthwith.

5.2 pm

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): There are few things that I like less than speaking and voting against the Government. I am happy to say that it is a rare occurrence when I have to do either of those things. For about 99 per cent. of the time I agree entirely with what they do and I support them in Divisions with great enthusiasm and faithfulness. I believe profoundly, however, in following my convictions, and one of my convictions is that one serves the party better by putting convictions above the diktats, arm twisting or threats of the Whips. As I have said on every occasion when charges for eye tests have been debated, the Government are wrong, and for at least seven reasons.

First, charges for eye tests breach the basic principle, which was adhered to for over 40 years, that whatever else is chargeable within the National Health Service, a check or test should be free. I have no objection to charges when a check or test has revealed that glasses or other appliances are necessary, so long as the individual can afford to pay. It is very much to our advantage to know as soon as we can if a person needs attention. It is cheaper to remedy the defect at an early stage and it is very much easier to deal with it. It is also much more likely to be cured.

Secondly, eye-test charges are extremely discriminatory. There are no charges for blood tests, cancer checks, heart scans, barium meals or X-rays. It has been suggested that anyone can afford to pay £12 for a test because some people spend that much on cigarettes, but that argument could just as easily be applied to all other vital tests. It is odd that the Government seem not to understand that eye tests will often reveal the early signs of cancer, blood pressure or diabetes. It is strange that a block should suddenly be imposed on one preventive test while other such tests romp along without interference. I do not know whether this means that eventually we are to have charges for other checks. I should like to know whether they are to be introduced.

Thirdly, the money that is saved is not to be spent on projects for which greater need is claimed. It has—*[Interruption.]* I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will listen, because I am speaking with great conviction. It has been made clear in earlier debates that the money that is saved—it had been estimated that it will be about £70 million per annum—will be spent on preventive medicine. It seems that it will not be spent on hip replacements or anything of that sort. Ministers have said that the money saved will be spent on preventive medicine. But eye tests are preventive medicine. It seems that the Government are saying, "We are saving money on food to spend it on food", or, "We are saving money on clothes to spend it on clothes." I am prepared to admit that there are different and more valuable types of food, or types of clothing, but surely there is no suggestion that eye tests are an inferior form of preventive care and do not amount to important primary health care. It is nonsensical to say that we are saving money on preventive care in the form of eye tests so that we can spend it on other forms of preventive care.

Fourthly, it has been recognised and accepted—my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has not suggested otherwise—that eye tests can reveal the first signs of many serious diseases. There is no doubt about that. It seems absurd that we should be denying ourselves the ability to spot the first signs of important diseases such as heart disease and cancer by introducing charges. That action has led undoubtedly to a reduction in the number of people seeking eye tests. My right hon. and learned Friend has argued that there has been no reduction, but I must tell him that there are signs that he is wrong. Indeed, the signs cannot be doubted. It worries me that the evidence has been discounted because some of the data have been obtained from opticians. The survey of the Association of Optometrists and the Federation of Ophthalmic and Dispensing Opticians revealed a 32·4 per cent. reduction in the number of eye tests being carried out. The Government's statistics are not suspect—they are plainly inaccurate.

I tabled a question in which I asked my hon. Friend the Minister for Health whether she would ensure that the survey, which has been referred to by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, of the number of tests carried out during the first quarter of 1990 would be based on information obtained from the records of ophthalmic opticians instead of the recollection of patients. My hon. Friend replied that the information would be obtained from patients to ensure that the results were clearly independent. Any medical practitioner in any area of medicine will cheerfully tell my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State that memories are notoriously fallible when determining when a test or check was carried out. It is not uncommon for a doctor to ask a patient when he or she last came to the surgery and to be told that it was two years ago, when in fact it was four years ago. And when a patient says that it was four years since he last came to see the doctor, sometimes it is really eight years. People cannot remember accurately. It seems extraordinary to reach important conclusions on the basis of people's memories.

I could understand my right hon. and learned Friend discounting the statistics given by opticians if they had relied on their memories, but they had not. They relied on their records. I strongly resent any suggestion that ophthalmic opticians—professional medical men—would falsify their records for the purpose of the survey.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *indicated dissent.*

Dame Jill Knight: It is a question not just of falsifying statistics for the purpose of this debate but of defrauding the Inland Revenue. If it is true that ophthalmic opticians are deliberately altering their records, something is seriously wrong.

Mr. Dalyell: Did the hon. Lady notice that the Secretary of State shook his head vigorously when she made her point about opticians' records? Perhaps she will ask the right hon. and learned Gentleman whether he thinks that opticians are doing something that borders on the deceitful. Are their records sincerely and accurately kept, or are they not?

Dame Jill Knight: My right hon. and learned Friend's speech will be read with great interest outside this House. He said that the profession was honourable but that he discounted its statistics because the profession itself had produced them. Surely that is the same as saying that the opticians falsified their records. That is the only possible interpretation that one can place on his remarks.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Three public surveys have shown that the opticians' figures are wrong. We are debating why they are wrong. It is not for me to comment, because I have not even seen the full results of the survey, but it was not based on records from all opticians. It was based on returns from some opticians. I offered as the most likely explanation for the discrepancy that the opticians most likely to respond to the survey were those who had lost out in the competitiveness of the past two years. The country is full of newly opened opticians' shops.

My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Brandon-Bravo) reminded me that one has just opened in the centre of Nottingham. I do not know to what extent those new businesses responded to the surveys, but they are responsible for the loss of trade by one practice in Durham, which now opens only two days a week. I am making the point that there were three excellent public surveys showing the level of the public's use of outlets, and showing also that the figures produced by the Association of Optometrists were inaccurate.

Dame Jill Knight: The "excellent" surveys to which my right hon. and learned Friend refers were all based on memory. I make the point that memories can be fallible, whereas the records of a practice set down in black and white cannot possibly be challenged.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Does my hon. Friend agree, as the hon. Member for the City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) ought to do, that whereas the records of one practice provide an accurate picture of the number of people who have had their eyes tested there, the best way of identifying how many members of the general public have had eye tests is to question the general public? Opticians' practices are opening and closing all the time. One only has to walk down the high streets of England to see that the nature of optical practice is dramatically changing.

Dame Jill Knight: My right hon. and learned Friend may believe that opticians' practices open and close as easily as that, but I assure him that the ones with which I have been connected have been in business since the very beginning of the profession.

Mr. Steinberg: The Secretary of State suggests that I wrote to only one practice. In fact, I wrote to virtually every practice in my constituency, and I received a similar reply from them all. I cited one practice as an example, but I could have cited half a dozen more.

Mr. David Lightbown (Lords Commissioner to the Treasury) *indicated dissent.*

Dame Jill Knight: I believe that the hon. Member for the City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) also mentioned that there were slight differences between the responses that he received, which is something that my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South-East (Mr. Lightbown) will be pleased to hear. He imagined that the responses were all exactly the same, and I am glad to have confirmation that they were not.

Another point of significance in view of my right hon. and learned Friend's remarks is that 10,000 people were involved in the Government survey whereas the AOP

[Dame Jill Knight]

survey covered 4 million people. I cannot believe that—surprise, surprise—they all just happened to say much the same thing.

I again draw the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend to the Economists Advisory Group report. The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) made mention of Professor Peter Hart, who is surely a reputable man, and one who works, as a statistician, in an honourable profession. He is emeritus professor of statistics at Reading university, and a man of his calibre who produces a report on behalf of the Economists Advisory Group can surely be relied upon to give an honest answer.

Professor Hart reported that the number of people undergoing tests since charges were introduced has declined by 32·4 per cent. The hon. Member for Livingston conceded that there was a sharp increase in the number of tests when the public knew that they would shortly be charged. Even so, that jump is estimated to have accounted for fewer than 1 million additional tests. Therefore, whereas the number of eye tests in 1988-89 was 13·2 million, the usual number was 12·2 million annually. Presumably it is fair to say that the extra 1 million tests are accounted for by people trying to beat the charges. In any event, in 1989-90 the number of tests fell to 8·9 million. That must be a source of worry and concern to my right hon. and learned Friend. That is hard data—3·3 million people, more or less, have been deterred from having eye tests.

Fifthly, it is untrue to say that people who are not eligible for free tests can easily afford the £12 fee. My right hon. and learned Friend argued today that it is likely that tests will eventually be free—but that cannot happen, for two reasons. One is that, as a result of laws passed by our Government, anyone is entitled to go to an optician, undergo a test and be given a prescription—and then take it down the road to a spectacle bar and have it made up there. It is breaking the law for an optician to say, "I will test your eyes provided that you buy your spectacles from us." First, opticians may not get any return or any possibility of a return when they have spent time and professional expertise on testing someone's eyes. Secondly, some 20 to 25 per cent. of all people who go to have their eyes tested do not need glasses, and therefore opticians would not be able to recoup any funds. A figure approaching 50 per cent. of ophthalmic opticians' time could be spent on such people, and if they did tests for nothing they would get no return. How on earth can professional people who have trained for some four years, and who know what they are about, open a practice and keep it open and pay receptionists and all the other charges involved if they get no return for 45 or 50 per cent. of the time that they work? It is not feasible.

I must tell my right hon. and learned Friend that it is highly unlikely that eye tests will ever be free. I do not understand why he said so, unless, perhaps—this thought just struck me—he is saying that people who need glasses would pay extra to make up for other people having tests free who did not need them. There is no other way of achieving free tests.

Sometimes I think that we do not all understand how difficult some people find it to make ends meet. We should always be sympathetic to that. People are being pressurised by mortgage costs and have all sorts of other difficulties to meet in their financial lives. Not everyone who is not entitled to a free eye test has no problem in finding £12 and we have to recognise that. It is not even a case of tests once every two years, because some people need them every six months. A woman who wrote to me recently was in that position because of a congenital eye problem, but she was not eligible for free tests.

I have always worried about the problems of parents, who put their young and growing children first. I wonder how many of us know what it is to keep a young child in shoes, never mind anything else. I am quite sure that many parents will say that there might not be anything wrong with their eyes this time, and "Johnny needs new shoes".

The other category of people who worry me are the elderly. There is no doubt that they are up to five times more likely to suffer from eye disease or degeneration than younger people. While it is perfectly true that not all elderly people need help from the Government, why do we give elderly people free prescriptions? If they are old-age pensioners they get free prescriptions whatever their income. Yet it would be fair to say that many prescriptions are not as important as having an eye test. Why have free prescriptions but make people pay for eye tests? Many old persons may well go blind if they cannot afford an eye test and that worries me greatly.

People can have free eye tests at hospitals, and more and more people outside this place will recognise that and ask their doctors to give them a chit to get such tests at the hospital. We shall be in trouble because the cost of a hospital eye test to the Government is somewhere between £25 and £50. I have checked that and there is no doubt about it; it is true. Where is the economic sense of paying up to £50 for someone to have an eye test in a hospital, but failing to pay £12 to a trained ophthalmic optician to do the test instead? Pretty soon, pressure on eye departments will cause problems, because people will wake up to the fact that they can have free tests there. I do not believe that they have realised that.

My final point knocks on the head for ever my right hon. and learned Friend's obviously sincere belief that there has been no drop in the number of eye tests. Practice closures can be seen all over the country. Some 250 practices closed this year and many rural areas will be without an optometrist. I must warn hon. Members about that. There seems to be a general disinclination in this place to love opticians. I sometimes wonder how many hon. Members, or their mothers, were frightened by an ophthalmic optician. There has been a sustained campaign against opticians. However, it is true that if the closures, which are now inevitable, take place in rural areas, many people who desperately need health care, and who are entitled to get it for nothing, will not be able to get that care. That also worries me.

I predict that there will probably be a loss of some 10 per cent. of ophthalmic practices within the next year because many of them are now working from hand to mouth. However much my right hon. and learned Friend tries to deny it, it is true that many ophthalmic opticians are going out of business. That is neither wise nor right. I beg my right hon. Friends in the Government to consider the possibility of helping the aged, who are in far greater danger than anyone else. If they cannot do anything else, for goodness' sake will they give special help to pensioners?

5.27 pm

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): The hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight), as is traditionally the case, speaks on this subject with detailed insight and common sense. However, perhaps what is most significant is that, as the first speaker from the Conservative Back Benches, she spoke not one word of support for her own Secretary of State. Not that that is liable to sway him, as he does not seem to be a Secretary of State who wants to listen to information or to consult individuals or organisations in various fields of health care. Indeed, he has something of a track record, and clearly delights in the way that he does not consult those people with knowledge within the field of his ministerial responsibility whom common sense would suggest that he should consult.

If one wants to buy a car, it is likely that one will want to ask friends who drive motor vehicles how they find different cars, and to discover the consumer and public view. The chances are that one will also speak to a car salesman or a mechanic. Similarly, the Secretary of State today laid weight upon a survey which has just been published at last. I find it a completely frustrating feature of this institution that, on the day that we are debating the issue, the information on which the conclusions in the Secretary of State's speech are based becomes available only when his backside hits the green leather at the end of his speech. That does not make for well-informed debate from Conservative Members or from the Opposition.

In the latter stages of his speech, the Secretary of State was like a drowning man clutching at the one piece of flotsam floating past.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Let me explain, in case it is thought that publishing it today was a device, that we intended to publish the survey next week. The hon. Gentleman knows that at the last minute the Labour party decided to table this motion. As my enemies had delivered themselves into my hands by returning to this corny old subject, I was unable to resist the temptation to bring it forward today. It contains the best and the most accurate information that anybody has to hand about the number of people having eye tests.

Mr. Kennedy: There is a veneer of plausibility about that, but it contains a number of extremely contentious points. I concede that the topic for debate was changed at short notice, but even if it had been known that the debate would be held at the end of this year, the Secretary of State would not have made the information available until the end of his speech on that occasion.

Mr. Michael: Does not the hon. Gentleman at least welcome the fact that the debate was brought forward because of widespread and serious concern about the topic?

Mr. Kennedy: I agree with the hon. Gentleman.

The Secretary of State is unwilling to consult those who are most affected and those with the best knowledge—the opticians. The Secretary of State's report, published today, refers to the survey of over 1,700 opticians that was carried out by the Liberal Democrats some months ago. On 17 May 1990, the Under-Secretary of State for Health wrote to me thanking me for enclosing the results of the Liberal Democrat optical survey, but he echoed the Secretary of State's argument that there is no point in consulting the professionals because they have an axe to grind. The only people whom the Government want to consult are the consumers; that is the only way to get the answers that the Government want. The Under-Secretary went on to say:

"It would, therefore, be wrong to rely entirely on information supplied by providers alone."

According to the survey that we have heard about this afternoon, it is quite all right for the Secretary of State to rely entirely on information provided only by consumers. The sense of that, both in the English language and in terms of the Government's health policy, is that the Secretary of State is trying to get a judicial blend in order to inform his actions concerning what both the professionals—the optometrists—and patients have found out for themselves. The optometrist surveys that have been referred to in the debate unanimously gave a thumbs down to the Secretary of State's policy. The Secretary of State's survey of consumers alone provides different information and he bases his entire argument on that information.

That is in complete contrast to the logic of the statement made to me on 17 May by the Under-Secretary of State for Health. Dismissing all the surveys that had been made before the Department of Health survey, which has floated down, like manna from heaven, on to the Secretary of State's lap today, the Under-Secretary of State for Health said on 17 May about all the previous surveys:

"They cannot at this stage be taken as a serious indicator of future trend."

By 6 June, the one survey that the Secretary of State has come out with is the definitive indicator of future trend. It is the one to end all arguments and all debate. That is the kind of nonsense with which we are being entertained by the Secretary of State and his colleagues in the Department of Health.

The Secretary of State quoted selectively from today's so-called definitive five-star results. According to the summary on the front page:

"Whilst there is a disparity between NOP's results for NHS sight testing and the known number of NHS sight tests paid for in the first quarter of 1990, there is no evidence, from this survey, of a fall in sight testing in the first quarter of 1990."

A little more detail about the disparity is to be found in paragraph 6.2:

"The disparity between NOP's results for NHS sight testing and the known number of NHS sight tests paid for casts some doubt on the credibility of the results."

I am happy to let those who devised and carried out the survey speak for themselves.

The Secretary of State has ignored the Association of Optometrists, the British Medical Association's ophthalmic committee and the Royal National Institute for the Blind. He bases his entire argument on the survey that has just come into his hands. However, the hon. Member for Edgbaston made the forceful point that many of the questions asked in the survey were unlikely to elicit an accurate response because they depended on human memory rather than on factual information provided from the records of optometrists and opticians.

Mr. Churchill (Davyhulme): The hon. Gentleman rightly draws attention to the fact that the Secretary of State's NOP survey shows that there is a clear discrepancy. What he has failed to allude to is the scale of that discrepancy, which appears to be quite colossal. Perhaps

[Mr. Churchill]

the Secretary of State, or the Minister of State who is to wind up the debate, will comment on it. According to paragraph 6.1 of the NOP survey:

"The estimate of NHS sight tests derived from the NOP survey can be compared with data collected from FPCs and Health Boards. 1·058 million were paid for by FPCs in England and Wales and Health Boards in Scotland in the first quarter of 1990. Of these, 0·624 million were adults aged 16 or over; this represents 1·4 per cent. of the adult population. The first two surveys conducted by the NOP suggest that 4·5 per cent. ... of the adult population had an NHS sight test in the period."

In other words, the NOP survey shows more than three times as many people saying that they remember having a sight test since Christmas than the Secretary of State's own figures suggest. Therefore, I query what value can be placed on the document.

Mr. Kennedy: The hon. Gentleman ought to be given a knighthood. I very much welcome his intervention. The Secretary of State is uncharacteristically silent. I have read the speech that the hon. Gentleman made on the subject in a previous debate. I believe that he has touched on a pertinent point. Whether we shall receive a pertinent answer remains to be seen.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I had not realised that my interventions were so popular, which is why I remained silent. The explanation is contained in the report. Many people think that the sight test that they pay for is an NHS sight test. The survey is not reliable in terms of the figures that it publishes about how many people have had NHS or private eye tests. We are concerned with the total number of eye tests. As I said in my speech, one could knock off 50 per cent. for errors. We could find every reason that we liked for error, and we should still come up with a figure that showed no decline in the number of eye tests, compared with the expected trend.

Mr. Churchill: But this is a 400 per cent. error.

Mr. Kennedy: As I am sure the hon. Gentleman appreciates, inflation and interest rates are going up, so why should not the margin of error here go up by a similar amount? That is a feature of the running of the country by this Government.

The hon. Member for Edgbaston made a legitimate case, but the Secretary of State has not responded to it. He has produced a fail-safe survey. It does not purport to be fail-safe, but it is based on individual human memory as opposed to facts held on record by opticians. There can be no doubt which survey is more accurate.

I would concede that simply to consult opticians, as we did in our survey, does not give as good a result as consulting a proper statistical blend of customers and opticians as it is reasonable to draw on customers' impressions as well. However, the input of opticians is critical to any set of findings, whatever proportion of those findings they represent.

The simple truth is that the opticians provide the only reliable facts available. Statistics drawn from the public are bound to include impressions, whereas the opticians provide hard evidence. If the Secretary of State is seriously questioning the accuracy or veracity of the facts provided by opticians, as he did in his speech in reply to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), he is bound to be casting some aspertions on the opticians. There are no two ways about it, and he cannot get away from it.

I adhere to the view that, whatever one may say about the various surveys that have been carried out, including our own, to base his entire argument, as the Secretary of State has done today, on one survey in preference to or in complete opposition to all the other surveys is surely bizarre and wrong-headed in the extreme.

Given the Secretary of State's track record and the way he goes about things in the Department of Health, I suspect that he did that simply because it is the only survey so far that has given him a fig leaf against the warnings uttered to him by his own Back Benchers and from the Opposition. I suspect that, yet again, as he did with the nurses and the ambulance men in the past and as he continues to do with family doctors, he has now picked another group of professionals in the Health Service and offended and alienated them by the tenor of his remarks today. He will live to regret it, as preventive health regrets the decision to introduce these wrong-headed charges on 1 April 1989.

5.41 pm

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): I shall not detain the House for long, but I want to make it absolutely clear that I reject what has been said by the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) and by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight). I have always believed that it is right in principle to charge those who can afford it relatively small amounts of money at the periphery of the National Health Service. That policy was started not by the present Government nor the last Labour Government but by the post-war Labour Government. That Government recognised that it was important to raise additional funds which could not be sustained out of general taxation because of the bottomless pit with which the Health Service is sometimes faced, and successive Governments have followed that principle.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has courageously and correctly faced up to the fact that the Department of Health can raise an additional £70 million of expenditure for primary health care from people like me.

I have been wearing glasses for the past two years. I came to the House in 1979, and at the age of 27 I had the good fortune of not needing to wear glasses. By pure coincidence in 1988 I was driving my car through Lincolnshire when I heard on my car radio that Lincolnshire police were planning to conduct spot sight tests for drivers. I was frightened and worried and decided to have my eyes tested. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State paid for me to have a free sight test, notwithstanding the fact that I cheerfully paid £98 for my glasses.

The hon. Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) mentioned various statistics. In 1988 an individual from the constituency of Brigg and Cleethorpes went to an optician in Pimlico for a free eye test. I have not had my eyes tested since; I was issued with these glasses two years ago and no doubt I shall receive a card from the optician inviting me back for a periodic eye test. I am a classic example of somebody who has no business to be receiving

taxpayers' money for an eye test. I went to have my eyes tested in 1988 and I have not had them tested since. That is why statistics in Durham are producing those results.

Mr. Churchill: I am sure that, on reflection, my hon. Friend will appreciate that his free eye test was paid for not by the Secretary of State but by the taxpayer. While he and the House will accept that no one is arguing today that those on above average earnings, such as himself or the printers in Wapping and what is left of Fleet street, should get taxpayers' money to pay for their eye tests, would he regard it as reasonable and right that one of my constituents who is earning less than a quarter of average earnings should be required to pay the full cost of a sight test? I cannot accept that. That individual should be entitled to a free eye test.

Mr. Brown: Plainly, my hon. Friend has not read the motion that we are debating. I am opposing a motion which

"calls upon Her Majesty's Government to restore a free preventive service for eye examinations."

In 1988, quite wrongly, the taxpayer—my hon. Friend is absolutely right about that—paid for me to benefit from such a service. So, with great respect to my hon. Friend, unless we amend it the motion is inviting us to do that and that is why I believe that it should be opposed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Edgbaston argued wrongly for free eye tests for all pensioners. I know that my hon. Friend looks very youthful, but I believe that she would be entitled to such a free eye test. I know that one should not discuss an hon. Lady's age in the Chamber, but we all know from *Vacher's* when my hon. Friend the Member for Edgbaston was born. I am sure that she would be the first to acknowledge that she and many pensioners in the United Kingdom are on above average earnings and should not receive free eye tests.

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brown: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman, but I have given way already and I do not wish to detain the House as other hon. Members want to speak.

The Government's proposals which were put into effect last year enable 20 million people, or nearly 40 per cent. of the population, to receive free eye tests. Those 20 million people consist of all children under 16, those on low incomes, the blind and partially sighted, students under 19 and people suffering from glaucoma. That is not unreasonable bearing in mind the fact that money is being released as a result of the peripheral charge which Opposition Members accepted, when they were in government and when they created the National Health Service, it was right and proper for the Health Service to raise from the taxpayer.

A not too dissimilar argument is whether those of us who can afford to pay prescription charges should do so. I shudder to think of the "ceaseless cascade" of medicine that is pouring down British throats. The Opposition should remember who said that.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Bevan.

Mr. Brown: My hon. Friend is nearly right. Because free medicine was available indiscriminately, that comment was made by the right hon. Member for Ebbw Vale in 1949, the great defender of the National Health Service.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: It was Bevan.

Mr. Brown: The right hon. Member recognised in 1949 that funds were distributed indiscriminately across the board to people who could afford to pay.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: My hon. Friend is wrong. It was Bevan.

Mr. Brown: My hon. Friend says that it was Aneurin Bevan, but I have a quote from the right hon. Member for Ebbw Vale.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Bevan was the Member for Ebbw Vale.

Mr. Brown: No less a person than Aneurin Bevan made that statement. The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) and the former Member for Ebbw Vale, who both served in the 1945 to 1950 Parliament, recognised that there was a case for having peripheral charges for those able to pay, just like many Members and people outside the Chamber.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Brown: I would give way were it not for the fact that this is a short debate and I have promised to be brief.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Be a sport.

Mr. Brown: I give way, briefly.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Is it not significant that Aneurin Bevan, who was supposed to be the father of the Health Service, complained about the "ceaseless cascade"? He was the Member for Ebbw Vale.

Mr. Brown: I entirely accept what my hon. Friend says. My hon. Friend and I would agree that that Labour Government established a principle followed by all successive Governments, notwithstanding the fact that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) said, for three years the Labour Government abolished prescription charges, only to restore them in 1968 at a rate 25 per cent. higher. All Governments have recognised the principle of charging for those peripheral services, and I include eye tests, for the reason that I described.

The Government have honoured their commitment in last year's debate. The fact that 40 per cent. of the population—20 million people—receive free eye tests shows that this is a properly targeted measure. The Government are right to ensure that an additional £70 million is available for the primary health care services. I shall have no hesitation in throwing out the Opposition's motion.

5.52 pm

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): What appals me most about the Government's attitude to health is that they have blatantly and unashamedly politicised pain and suffering. This is another deliberate policy that is designed to damage the National Health Service. The performance of the Secretary of State will find great favour with the Prime Minister, because it is business as usual, despite the massive amount of factual evidence that the ending of free eye examinations has led to a dramatic fall in the number of eye tests, with dangerous results for the health of millions of people.

[Mrs. Alice Mahon]

I agree with the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) that evidence is available if the Government choose to seek it—in the audited records of opticians to which ophthalmic committees have access and which community health councils could monitor. Means-tested benefits carry a stigma, as is shown by the low take-up. If the Prime Minister or the Secretary of State had an elderly relative on a low income who needed an eye test but was deterred because of cost or because he or she did not wish to fill in a lengthy form or take part in means-testing, and that person were in danger of developing glaucoma or a tumour that could be cured if found in time, they would have to explain that they were against any collective provision for individual need at the time of need and paid for through taxation, whatever the pain or suffering caused. They would have to say sorry but, as the amendment states,

"those who can afford to pay for sight tests should do so".

That would be their message, without any regard to a person's ability to pay and to choice.

My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) talked about the dramatic fall in the number of people receiving eye tests. The Secretary of State said that there had been no fall-off in eye testing and that there was an opinion poll to prove it, yet he does not believe in the poll results. The right hon. and learned Gentleman could look at the audited records in every practice and collect the data if he wanted that information, but I suspect that he does not want it.

Like my hon. Friends in their constituencies, I have been keeping an eye on the position in mine. I checked today with the local ophthalmic committee, the community health council and some local opticians who were worried, and I saw the latest survey which had been conducted by the ophthalmic committee, monitored and overseen by the CHC. The first survey, for the six months from April 1989 to October 1989, showed that the number of tests had fallen by 34 per cent. The second survey, from October 1989 to April 1990, showed that the number was still down by 32 per cent., which appears now to be the permanent level. That figure is the same as the one arrived at by the professor of statistics at Reading university. I would argue that that is a more realistic figure than the ones used by the Secretary of State.

It will come as no surprise to my hon. Friends to hear that 32 per cent. is just an average; sometimes it is more than 40 per cent. in more deprived areas in my constituency. That is a fair measure of what is happening locally. Conservative Members should look at the surveys carried out in their constituencies and then argue in the House about the pathetic attempt by the Secretary of State to use the NOP survey. Despite all the facts, we are still subjected to the self-righteous ranting of the right hon. and learned Gentleman, and the self-righteousness shown in the amendment tabled by the Prime Minister. Neither the Secretary of State nor the Prime Minister is deaf. They know exactly what is happening and that the 32 per cent. fall-off is nearer the truth than their figures.

The hon. Member for Edgbaston made a point, which is worth repeating, about the costs that will result when people cotton on to the fact that they can have an eye test carried out free at an ophthalmic clinic. I asked about the local cost and the hon. Lady said that it would be between £25 and £50, an average of £35 in my constituency, for referral by a general practitioner compared with £11·20 for referral by an optician.

There is no legal argument for abolishing free eye tests. If people cotton on to going to hospitals for tests, it will cost the NHS a great deal of money. While preparing for this debate, I discovered that there is a seven-month waiting list at the ophthalmic clinic in my constituency. That is tragic. However, Ministers, and those who support the Government and their onslaught on the NHS, will not be found in those tragic queues because, like the Prime Minister, they can buy their way to the top.

The current crisis in the National Health Service and the Government's policy on eye tests have been created deliberately because the Prime Minister loathes the NHS. The ending of free eye tests is part of the Prime Minister's determination to dismantle the whole structure of post-war social provision and end what she sees as the hated socialist ideal. She deliberately seeks to lower standards of patient care and to produce a two-tier system. That system exists now. If someone has some money and is okay financially, he can have a test and benefit from it. However, if someone is on a low income and worried about a budget or concerned about water bills for which there is no rebate, and the poll tax, he will lose out.

I have a message for the Government from Mr. Bruce, who is the director-general of the Royal National Institute for the Blind. He referred to people missing out on eye tests and the possible subsequent identification of medical conditions. He said:

"Unnecessary blindness is not something to be proud of."

I believe that political myopia is something to be downright ashamed of, and that is what the Government are suffering from with regard to eye testing.

6.1 pm

Mr. John Maples (Lewisham, West): If the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) believes that the Government are deliberately embarked on a policy of destroying the Health Service, she must consider why expenditure on the Health Service has risen by 40 per cent. in real terms under this Government while it fell in one year under the last Labour Government when they slashed hospital building programme capital allocations by 30 per cent. If we consider the statistics which show who has done what for the Health Service, there is no contest.

The hon. Member for Halifax became bogged down in the statistical argument which, to some extent, has sidetracked our debate. We have moved away from the basic principles. We should all be suspicious about statistics because politicians have a predilection for picking the statistics that suit their arguments. I was surprised by the readiness with which the Opposition swallowed the propaganda from professional organisations about the Health Service reforms. They swallowed the British Medical Assocition's propaganda hook, line and sinker.

We all remember the lawyers objecting to reforms in the legal profession and we viewed those objections with healthy scepticism. We said to ourselves, "The lawyers know a lot about it and they are worth listening to, but they are talking their book." It is amazing that the Opposition do not say the same thing about doctors and opticians. We need to know more about the survey of opticians because there might, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State said, be some

self-selection in the sample. If that is the case, the survey is biased in that it has answers from opticians whose business has fallen off over the past year.

I have some evidence that I would like to adduce. I believe that a foolproof indication of whether there are problems with matters such as charges for eye tests is the constituency mail bag. I have received not one complaint about charges for eye or dental tests. If things are free, people are more likely to use them out of interest or from a need to feel secure. I suspect that many people probably had one eye test a year when tests were free while the general reckoning is that a test every two years is necessary. Many of those unnecessary tests have dropped out of the total.

Another adjustment to the statistics arises from the fact that when a charge is to be introduced, many people rush in and have a test for free. A figure of 1 million has been used with regard to eye tests. However, the adjustment is not 1 million; it is 2 million. One million people who would have had a test in the year after charges were introduced had a test the year before. The adjustment to be made in the discrepancy in the figures is not 1 million, but 2 million. If that adjustment is made, the figures look more realistic. Having said that, it would be useful in the context of this debate to have accurate figures to show the results of the change in charges for eye tests.

One of the basic principles is that we are talking about a large amount of money. Introducing the charge saves £90 million. To that we must add the £50 million which would be the cost for reintroducing free dental checks. That total of nearly £150 million a year is the cost of three district general hospitals. I cannot believe that any responsible Secretary of State for Health, were he Labour or Conservative, would choose free eye and dental checks instead of three new district general hospitals. I would not choose free tests and I cannot believe that any of my hon. Friends would either.

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): Is that the choice?

Mr. Maples: Of course it is. If we reinstate free tests, the £150 million must come from somewhere.

The only substantial argument against charges is that of deterrence. Do charges deter people from having tests? The Opposition constantly cause scares when charges are introduced. When the voucher scheme for spectacles was introduced in 1983, the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), as usual, went over the top. He said:

"The result for the public will be eye strain and headaches at best. At worst, it will be inability to see clearly so that they are at risk in their work, a hazard on the road or otherwise may injure themselves".—[*Official Report*, 20 December 1983; Vol. 51, c. 306.]

That was his prediction. However, the opticians' business did not fall off; instead, the price of spectacles fell and that is exactly what the Government predicted.

We hear these scares from the Opposition time and again. Every time dental charges were raised over the past 10 years, the Opposition said the same thing, but there has been a steady increase in the courses of dental treatment. They have increased by 20 per cent. over the past 10 years. I suspect that each rise in charges brings a slight drop in the service partly because people defer treatment which they would otherwise have carried out immediately and partly because they have treatment before the charges are raised. However, after that the general trend picks up. Dentistry surveys have shown that the cost of the treatment—we must remember that only the test was free—is the fourth most important factor. The most important factor is that people say to themselves that there is no need for a dental check; the second factor is pain; and the third is the difficulty of finding a good dentist. The cost was the fourth factor. We must consider whether costs are the deterrent that Opposition Members make them out to be in an attempt to stir up a scare.

Mr. Turner: Does the hon. Gentleman know where the cheapest spectacles can be found now? They are to be found in markets all over the country. There are hundreds of thousands of spectacles on stalls. People try on the spectacles and try to read the book provided on the stall. That is how spectacles were sold in this country 50 years ago and that is what we are getting back to. That is where people who cannot afford eye tests are going to get something to suit their eyes.

Mr. Maples: That is happening to a limited extent.

Mr. Turner: It is a disgrace.

Mr. Maples: Yes, and it certainly should not happen. To the extent that it is happening, it is limited and it happened when there were free eye tests as well.

Mr. Turner: No.

Mr. Maples: It certainly did. The argument is that it has happened since changes were made in the way that spectacles were paid for. There is no evidence that what the hon. Gentleman described has happened only since April last year.

The logic of the argument about deterrence should extend beyond the test because only the test was free. One always had to pay a contribution towards dental work or for the spectacles that might or might not have been needed after a test. If the Opposition are to take their argument about deterrence to its logical extreme, the tests should be free as well, and the cost would become far more than £150 million.

Let us suppose that the Opposition are right and that there is a deterrent. I shall refer to glaucoma later, because it is serious. Apart from that, what are the consequences? They are that people will walk round wearing the wrong glasses for slightly longer than they used to, or they will have toothache. They are not exactly life-threatening conditions, whereas the £150 million can be spent on alleviating real suffering. As always in politics and public spending, there is a trade-off.

Mr. Turner: The hon. Gentleman is talking about hospital beds and putting people into hospital beds when they do not need to be there. They would not need to be in those beds for operations because they would have received preventive treatment. Why does the hon. Gentleman cast mean motives on professional people by suggesting that they are prducing false statistics on fewer eye tests? Why does he say that people had eye tests when they did not need them only because they were free? Why does not the hon. Gentleman take people on genuine trust and regard them as honest?

Mr. Maples: I rely on the results of the NOP survey, which proved exactly the opposite to what the hon. Gentleman is trying to deduce. As for his point about

[Mr. Maples]

hospital beds being filled up with people who need hip operations because they cannot have eye tests, that is rubbish. The hon. Gentleman should analyse——

Mr. Turner: I said eye operations.

Mr. Maples: The hon. Gentleman did not. He said operations in general. The idea that free eye tests were somehow the early diagnosis of all sorts of acute hospital cases is the most awful rubbish.

Dame Jill Knight: A moment or two ago, my hon. Friend said it was not serious to be wandering round wearing the wrong glasses. I assure my hon. Friend that if one is driving a car it is very serious to be wearing the wrong glasses.

Mr. Maples: I do not think that anybody who owns a car will have any difficulty in coming up with £10 for an eye test.

Who are the people who are being asked to pay the £10 or £12 and of what consequence is it to them? We know that the exemptions cover children, pregnant mothers and people on income support and family credit—about 35 per cent. to 40 per cent. of the population. The other 60 per cent. who are being asked to pay have had amazing increases in their take-home pay over the past 10 years. The cut-off for family credit is about three quarters of average earnings. Somebody on three quarters of average earnings has had an increase in his take-home pay of £2,084 over the past 10 years. If he were on average earnings, he would have had an increase of over £3,000 in his take-home pay, and, even on half average earnings, which is now £7,500 a year, he would have had an increase of £1,500 in take-home pay.

All levels of earnings at which people might be asked to pay the £10 have had increases in take-home pay of over £1,500 in the past 10 years. In that context, it is palpable nonsense to suggest that £12 every other year is a significant item in a family budget. It cannot feature at all. We are talking about a cost of £6 a year to have an eye test every other year to somebody whose income has increased by at least £1,500 over that period. It is not unreasonable to ask people as they become better off to make some contribution at the margin to their health care. It basically affects only those whose household incomes have increased by more than £1,500 per year. As my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) pointed out, the average family spends £10 a week on alcohol. We are suggesting that they should spend £10 every two years on an eye test.

Glaucoma is more serious. Undoubtedly, eye tests show it up early in some cases, but the eye test was never a screening process for glaucoma. If it is thought as a matter of public policy that we should screen for glaucoma, we should do it some other way than through a random eye test, whether it is free or paid for. The Government have acknowleged that by making a special exemption for people who are more likely to have glaucoma or who are related to people who have it—there is a large hereditary element in it. To a substantial extent, that matter is taken care of.

As I have already said, one third, or perhaps even 40 per cent., of the population do not have to pay for the eye test, and the other 60 per cent. have had such substantial increases in income that the charge cannot be a deterrent that could lead to serious consequences. We are going through a time when people are able, willing and prepared to take greater responsibility for themselves and not to expect the state to do everything for them. As their real incomes rise, it is the policy of the Government, which I wholly applaud—it is one reason why I got into politics —that they should be left with more of their income in their pockets through less taxation and more of the responsibility for paying for things for themselves where they can. At the very best, it is patronising for the Opposition to suggest that they are not capable or responsible for making that decision and that they are likely to be deterred from taking care of their health by a charge that averages out at £6 a year.

An interesting way of looking at that argument is that, in 1988, the year when the charges were debated and when the legislation was passed the Opposition objected to a 2p income tax cut in the Budget. They said that the money should have been spent on improving the Health Service. That cut in income tax is worth £180 a year to someone on average earnings. The charge for an eye test is £12 every other year. The Opposition suggested that those who would have preferred that additional £180 not to be given back to them but to be spent on the Health Service are so stupid, shortsighted or mean-minded that they will not spend £12 every two years, having had a £180 a year tax saving, on an eye test. It does not add up.

If people are willing, as the Opposition argued at the time, for the money to be spent on the Health Service, surely they are willing to spend a fraction of that amount on one item of health care, which is obviously a sensible way to protect the health of their eyes. It is patronising and silly to suggest that people are not responsible for themselves. Clearly they can come up with £10 or £12 a year.

The Government need no lectures from the Labour party on the funding and management of the Health Service. Over the past 10 years, the Government have spent £3 for every £1 that the Labour party spent on it —an increase in real terms of 40 per cent. That increase in real terms is £9 billion. We spend more than £40 a week for every family of four on the Health Service. There are thousands more doctors——

Mr. Turner: It is not enough.

Mr. Maples: It will never be enough if the service is free, in the sense that we will never be able to remove all the waiting lists. All that I can say is that it is an awful lot more than the previous Labour Government spent.

We have the largest-ever hospital building programme. We treat more patients as in-patients, out-patients and day cases, and we need no lectures from the Opposition on the funding of the Health Service.

It is interesting to look at the Opposition's policy review, which they euphemistically call "Looking to the Future". It seems to be a giant step back to the 1960s. There are no commitments to spend any additional money on health care. However, there is a commitment to "bring back free eye tests and dental checks." There is also a commitment to abolish competitive tendering. Those three things together will cost £200 million and will not deliver one iota of additional health care. They will not improve health care one little bit. If that £200 million were available, it would build four new district general hospitals every year. The Opposition are

saying that they would choose to spend it on removing those three things which are purely political dogma—they are not related to health care at all.

If one extends the logic of the Opposition's argument to prescription charges, which they were going to remove at one time, and to providing free glasses and free dental care which, if the charge for a test is a deterrent, must equally be a deterrent, one is talking of a sum well in excess of £1 billion. That sum would add absolutely nothing to the quantity of health care delivered to the public. It is extraordinary that, in the Opposition's document, the future of the Health Service rates one page, half of which is taken up with community care. There are no commitments to additional spending apart from the ones that I have mentioned. Even the ones that are mentioned must be taken with a pinch of salt.

In the public expenditure debate, the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), who has some responsibility for the Labour party's attitude to public spending, said:

"What we are promising is an increase for pensioners and an increase in child benefit. Everything else that is regarded as a desirable aim is also listed, quite clearly and specifically, as something that we hope to do as resources allow."—[*Official Report*, 13 February 1990; Vol. 167, c. 179.]

It is difficult to know whether the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) has co-ordinated his policy with that of his hon. Friend. One assumes that he has, but there is a conflict between the commitments made in "Looking to the Future" and what the hon. Member for Derby, South said. The hon. Lady made her statement categorically and reiterated it twice in response to interventions from my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. She said that that was all that the Labour party would commit itself to doing if it were to come into government.

If what the hon. Lady said is correct, what the hon. Member for Livingston said about £200 million for abolishing competitive tendering and the charges for eye and dental check-ups is on the wish list. In other words, the Labour party is saying, "These are the things that we should like to do if resources allow." Well, we do that—if resources allow, we increase the resources that are given to the National Health Service, which is why we have been able to spend an additional £9 billion on it. One suspects that those things are not Labour party commitments, and that they are part of the letter to Santa Claus which the hon. Member for Livingston is puffing up the chimney with the smoke and which the hon. Member for Derby, South, who is sitting at the top, is tearing up unless its commitments refer to child benefit or pensions. I hope that I have the attention of the hon. Member for Livingston.

When the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) replies to the debate, it will be interesting to hear whether those three items—abolishing competitive tendering and reintroducing free eye and dental check-ups —are absolute commitments on the part of the Labour party when it forms its next Government, and whether they override the equally categorical statement by the hon. Member for Derby, South in the public expenditure debate on 13 February.

The Labour party seems to be trying to talk out of both sides of its mouth at the same time. On the one side, the Treasury spokesmen are trying to reassure the City, the markets, the press and the taxpayers that they are not trying to pick their pocket to a large extent to pay for a major public expenditure programme, while on the other side the Labour party is trying to say to the voters, "Of course, we shall spend billions of pounds on transport, education and health." Of course, the only reason for ever electing a Labour Government is that they would raise more money in taxes and spend it on public services.

However, the Labour party will be rumbled because taxpayers and consumers are exactly the same people and they will realise that the Labour party is delivering two totally different messages. One message says, "We shall spend a lot more money", and the other says, "We shall not spend any more money." It will be interesting to have that contradiction resolved. I repeat that taxpayers and consumers are the same people and they will rumble the con trick that the Labour party is trying to perpetrate on them.

In conclusion, our changes seem a sensible way of ensuring an additional £90 million for the Health Service. If one adds in the dental checks, a total of £140 million is available to be spent on better and more constructive things and on alleviating real suffering and life-threatening conditions. The structure exempts vulnerable people from the charges. Those who are liable to the charges have had enormous increases in their take-home pay in the past 10 years. Those on half average incomes have received a minimum of £1,500. It is not unreasonable to ask those people to pay £12 every two years. The Labour party's opposition to the charges—just like its opposition to competitive tendering—is pure political dogma. Changing the system would not deliver one iota more health care. It makes absolutely no sense to reverse the change. It is right as a matter of principle to reduce people's taxes and to leave them with more money in their own pockets and more responsibility for taking care of themselves. On the whole, people behave responsibly and it is patronising to suggest that they do not.

6.23 pm

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): I listened carefully to the hon. Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples). With every speech by a Conservative Member we seem to hear higher figures for the money that the Government have saved as a result of not having free tests. We have heard £70 million, £90 million and even £150 million being quoted. It has even been said that we could have three new general hospitals as a result of the savings. What utter nonsense. Even Ministers have said that the money that is saved will be spent on primary health care—and whoever heard of the building of three new general hospitals being part of any Government's primary health care budget?

I also listened with great care to the Secretary of State. He said that the Government intend to give everyone the service that they require. However, he then spent half an hour telling us why the Government could not give everyone the service that they need. He also said that, even after the introduction of the changes, the Government were still paying for the tests of the third of the population who qualify for income support, and we know that the take-up of income support has been extremely low. Unfortunately, therefore, a number of people who would qualify for free tests if they applied for the income support, to which they are entitled, are not receiving free eye tests.

We all agree that the average charge is between £12 and £15. Although many right hon. and hon. Members can no

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doubt afford £12 or £15, many people cannot. Unfortunately, the people who will be hit hardest are the most vulnerable in our society.

The decision to abolish free eye tests disproportionately affects the elderly. The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) said that many elderly people can afford to pay for their eye tests and referred to the average income of elderly people. However, the average income of elderly people is skewed by the fact that the income of the top one fifth accounts for a disproportionate amount of the income of all elderly people. The average pensioner's income is less than £100 per week—it is actually £98 per week, but four fifths of elderly people receive substantially less than that. They are therefore hit by charges for eye tests. We know that the cost of the elderly to the Health Service is substantially more than the cost of those who are not of pensionable age. We also know that 78 per cent. of elderly people between the ages of 78 and 85 suffer from severe eye conditions, yet it is precisely that category of vulnerable people that the Government are refusing to assist. That is deplorable.

There is no doubt in my mind—if they were honest, there would be no doubt in the minds of Conservative Members either—that substantially fewer people are now attending for eye tests than was the case before 1 April 1989. We all know that evidence from our constituencies. There is also the anecdotal evidence that we hear when speaking to our friends, colleagues and families. If the Government are seeking to rely on one set of statistics to justify their position, and if they refuse to accept any statistics that suggest an opposite point of view, they are a blinkered Government who are refusing to look at all the evidence.

The Secretary of State is a lawyer and, as such, he must look at both sides of the argument. However, he refuses to do so because the evidence does not fit the Government's position. The right hon. and learned Gentleman refuses to accept that anybody who can produce statistics to support a contrary point of view can have a valid argument. In those circumstances, I believe that the survey that the Government have produced is fundamentally flawed. The Government must look at the hard evidence that is produced by the practitioners, rather than relying on people's memories.

I shall conclude, as other hon. Members wish to speak. It is short sighted of the Government to dispense with free eye tests because, as we have heard in many valuable speeches, eye tests can detect other conditions. Ensuring that people have free eye tests actually saves money. Therefore, even if the Government are not prepared tonight to introduce free eye tests for everybody, I urge them to ensure that pensioners are entitled to free eye tests from this day forward.

6.29 pm

Mr. Keith Vaz (Leicester, East): What an extraordinary speech we have heard from the hon. Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples). Despite the fact that he sits on the Conservative side, I always considered him to be a reasonable person. How extraordinary that he should tell us that he received no representations whatever from his constituents protesting against the imposition of charges for eye tests. I advise him to keep his speech well hidden from his constituents in Lewisham, West.

Even before charges were introduced, some constituents of mine in Leicester felt that charges would have a detrimental effect on their health. On 31 October 1988 a group of pensioners went to Downing street and presented the Prime Minister with a gift. It was an unusual gift—a large pair of wooden spectacles and a large tooth. I do not know whether either of the items fitted the Prime Minister, but they were intended as a symbol of the effect that charges would have on people in my constituency. My constituents predicted over one and a half years ago that fewer people would have eye tests, and that is exactly what has happened.

Conservative Members are keen to give us facts and figures about the amount of money that has been spent on the Health Service. I agree entirely with what the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) said in her eloquent speech. I, too, believe that the facts are clear. She gave us facts on the national position and spoke of a 30 per cent. reduction in the number of eye tests. The figure for Leicestershire is lower but just as stark. According to the Leicestershire local optical committee, there has been a 25 per cent. reduction in the number of eye tests carried out on people in the county of Leicestershire. Hundreds of thousands of people—the hon. Lady said millions—nationally have serious eye disorders which will go undetected as a result of the introduction of charges for eye tests.

Contrary to what we were told by Conservative Members, people in my constituency were angry at the introduction of charges for eye tests. There was huge opposition to it. One person who worked hard campaigning against the charges in my constituency was Mr. Edwards who lives at 67 Marston road, Leicester. He was an optician. Shortly after the charges were introduced it was discovered that he had cancer and that it was terminal. Despite his illness, he campaigned vigorously in Leicester against the charges.

Mr. Edwards presented me with a petition signed by 105 people who opposed the scheme. That was all the names that he had time to collect in the limited time available before he died. I presented that petition to Parliament and shortly afterwards Mr. Edwards went into hospital and died there. I hope that that petition was a suitable memorial to the work that he did on behalf of local people to ensure that the voice of local people was raised against charges for eye tests.

Retinitis pigmentosa is an eye disease which affects a fair number of people in Britain. I have been told that one person in every 4,000 has the potential of developing the disease. A Leicester local councillor, Mary Draycott, members of whose family suffer from the disease, brought to my attention the fact that those who suffer from the disease are not exempt from charges for eye tests. Pressure on local doctors has increased greatly since the introduction of charges for eye tests simply because in the past relatives of those who suffer from retinitis pigmentosa were entitled to a free test. They can no longer have a free test. First, they must go to their general practitioner, who must refer them to a hospital doctor, who, in turn, must refer them to an optician for a free eye test. I wrote to a Minister—not the Minister who is at the Dispatch Box but

a previous Minister—about that matter urging her to initiate a scheme to exempt such people from paying for eye tests. Unfortunately, her response was negative.

I received a letter from a Mr. Clinton Smith who is the honorary secretary of the Leicestershire local optical committee. He wrote to me on 11 April 1989. In opposing the charges introduced by the regulations, he contrasted the view expressed by the Government about the tests with the way in which people operate according to the family doctor service. He said:

"It is like suggesting that people can accurately decide for themselves what treatment they need from a family doctor and, although the doctor is trained and able to assist with the best possible advice in their interest, they are encouraged for commercial reasons to risk their health and happiness, and possibly their life, by demanding only an inferior part of the service should be given."

That is what we are discussing today. An inferior service is being provided because of the introduction of charges for eye tests.

Opposition Members are right to draw attention to the whole range of cuts in the National Health Service. One must see charges for eye tests in the context of the cuts affecting our local health services. The hon. Member for Edgbaston wanted to know where it would all end. I can tell her. It will end in the same way as it has ended in America—in a privatised Health Service. I visited America recently and I know that other hon. Members from both sides of the House have done so, too. When I was there it cost £25 to see a doctor. That is exactly what is intended by introducing charges for eye tests. We shall have a more and more privatised Health Service which we regarded as free at the points of entry and of need.

In my constituency and across the county of Leicestershire cuts have bitten into the local Health Service. Hon. Members from both sides of the House recently had a meeting with the Secretary of State about charges for tests and cuts in the Health Service. It was like communicating with a brick wall. If any hon. Members were thinking of seeing the Health Secretary to lobby on behalf of their health authorities, they should not bother simply because the Secretary of State is not interested in providing any assistance either to Labour or Conservative Members.

I shall finish by quoting from a letter that I received on the day of the Third Reading of the Health and Medicines Bill on 1 November 1988. A student came all the way from Leicester and handed me a letter which was as relevant now as it was then. She urged me to vote against the imposition of charges for tests. She said:

"You may be able to eat with false teeth, walk with false legs but you cannot see with a false eye."

That is what we are saying to the Government. We urge them to put away their false eyes and consider the position in a positive and constructive way. We hear a great deal these days about reviewing the poll tax because of enormous opposition to it. I advise Conservative Members that now is the time to review charges for eye tests and abolish them.

6.37 pm

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): I have an obvious interest to declare in that I have worn spectacles since I was 13. Since then, I have seen the eye test develop from a relatively unsophisticated process to the detailed test that is provided now. The last time that I went to the optician to have my eyes tested—last year—it took about 40 minutes to go through all the electronic and other tests, including blowing air into the eye to detect glaucoma. When one visits the optician, as I do every year, one is always faced with a charge.

I remember that when eye tests were free the cost of spectacles was amazing. At the age of 19 I paid about £70 for a pair of spectacles. When I went to buy spectacles last year the cost for certain pairs was as high as £200 or £300. However, since the introduction of greater competition in the supply of spectacles brought about by the Government, it has become possible for people to buy spectacles for as little as £25. Taken with the cost of the test, which is only £10 or £12—a reasonable charge for 40 minutes' work—the total charge is reasonable. It is certainly within the reach of many people in Britain to have their eyes tested once a year or once every two years.

When the reforms were first suggested last year I was one of the most sceptical Conservative Members. I went to see the Minister privately to discuss whether they were necessary. I assure the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) that I for one have no plans for the privatisation of the Health Service. I can tell the rest of the House that many Conservative Members would fight to the death rather than see that happen. Many, if not all, of us recognise the great value of the NHS. It will long remain so.

I looked up the history of the NHS charges to see what the precedents were for this form of charge and found that they were first introduced by the Labour Government who set up the NHS. I looked further and found that when the then right hon. Member for Ebbw Vale, Mr. Bevan, was Minister for Health, he said that charges in the National Health Service were "not a tax" on the Health Service, but "a readjustment within it". This is just another series of readjustments which were first brought about by the Labour Government.

Last week I returned from the Soviet Union. In that socialist Nirvana, which many Labour Members undoubtedly aspire to establish here, there are Health Service charges for a whole range of items, such as medicines, prescriptions and eye tests.

After careful consideration, I believe that there is much to be said for what the Government are doing. They are releasing a great deal of money for investment elsewhere in the service and I know that the Minister is monitoring the matter all the time.

6.41 pm

The Minister for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): We have had a brief and, at times, heated debate on a subject which is of great concern and importance to many.

Frankly, Labour Members cannot have it both ways. Many whinged and groaned about the supposed demise of optical services, questioned our commitment to going ahead with the survey and pressed us for the results. We have undertaken an independent survey and made the results available in full. There is no conspiracy or concealment. The facts speak for themselves. Once again, the doom and gloom mongers have been seen in their true colours. The growth of the uptake of sight tests that took place through the 1980s is continuing.

At a time of rising prosperity—after all, the average family has seen an increase in living standards of 34 per cent. over the past 10 years—those who can do so should pay for their sight test. All will agree that the vulnerable,

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the frail and the needy should have free sight tests. That is why children, students, people on low incomes, the blind, the partially sighted, diabetics and those with glaucoma and their older relatives are eligible for free tests.

Reference has been made to several surveys produced recently, each showing a fall in sight test demand since the introduction of charges. The plain fact is that most surveys have been commissioned either directly or indirectly by the profession or those with a special interest. There is no doubt that extensive pre-publicity about charges encouraged many people to bring forward their appointments to avoid the new arrangements. Indeed, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State mentioned that some opticians even stayed open until midnight to beat the April 1989 deadline.

We estimate that in the 15 months between 1987 and April 1989 about 1·8 million more sight tests were carried out over and above what would normally have been expected. That is a revised figure of an earlier estimate and relates to all of Great Britain. It takes account of the large number of sight tests conducted before 1 April 1989, but which were paid for later.

Hon. Members will be aware that during the passage of the Health and Medicines Bill the Government undertook to monitor the effects of the new system. We have met that undertaking in full. We commissioned the independent market research company, National Opinion Poll, to survey the number of NHS and private sight tests carried out in the first quarter of 1990. As my right hon. and learned Friend made clear, we have acted swiftly to make that information available to the House today.

I want to make it clear, however, that we have in no way sought to conceal the fact that NOP, in undertaking the survey, made a minor error. It altered the wording in the later weeks of the survey. That does not affect the number of tests undertaken, but we are concerned that it affects the interpretation given about whether or not the test was private or on the NHS. This is spelt out fully in the documents without any attempt at concealment. Indeed, NOP takes full responsibility for that error.

The NOP report concludes that an estimated 4·5 million adults—a total of 5 million people if children are included—received a sight test in the first three months of 1990. That compares with 4.4 million in the same quarter of 1989.

As I have made clear, there is no disagreement that the proposed changes resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of those seeking tests. That is why to establish an underlying pattern we need to look at the 1987 figures. In assessing the report we projected forward the expected uptake on the basis of the upward trend established during the decade. If consumers are seeking eye tests at the same rate as that established trend, we would now expect 3·5 million to have come forward in the first quarter of 1990.

We recognise and, again, make it clear in the comments on the report that surveys of this kind encourage over-estimation by the interviewee. Our independent survey, even when generous allowance is made for possible over-reporting, suggests that there were an estimated 4·1 million sight tests in the first quarter of 1990—600,000 more than the trends would reasonably suggest. Even if we assumed a 50 per cent. rate of over-reporting, there would be more tests that in 1987. Therefore, the survey provides firm evidence, which is endorsed by many of the reports available in the optical press, that the market is again on the upturn.

The hon. Members for Livingston (Mr. Cook) and for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) referred to the Economists Advisory Group. We have never said that our survey is the only one to be believed. Indeed, paragraph 8 of our report suggests that the true figure may be somewhere between the NOP figure and that in the most recent EAG reports.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight), who is a champion of this subject and who is well known and respected in this House, made several important points. Her comment, and that of the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon), that patients are being referred to hospitals to obtain an eye test has not been borne out in evidence. I cannot believe that practitioners would follow such a course of action.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the Minister give way?

Mrs. Bottomley: I am afraid that I have little time.

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mrs. Bottomley: Pensioners have never been automatically exempted from optical charges on the grounds of age rather than income.

We heard excellent contributions from my hon. Friends the Members for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown), for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples) and for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin). We are confident that eyesight tests are on a stable course. We take seriously the importance of providing a Health Service with a proper emphasis on primary health care and on eye tests. Only recently we made possible domiciliary visits so that pensioners who cannot leave their homes can now receive an NHS sight test at home. That started on 1 June. It is a further recognition of our desire to target resources on those who are vulnerable and to make sure that they can benefit from a test.

Similarly, in April this year when the Government increased the money spent on the value of optical vouchers, we targeted those in greatest need. We redefined voucher band A so that more patients would fall into the higher group and receive more help.

Many hon. Members have spoken about the importance of prevention, and the need for people to understand that their eyes must be cared for and protected. Hon. Members will be aware that, with the new GP contracts, prevention and health promotion are fundamental concepts. Those aged over 75 will receive regular visits and health checks, and sensory perceptions will be part of that assessment: vision will of course be checked. The Government intend to collaborate with GPs to ensure that they have all the relevant information to ensure that their patients receive the care that they need.

I hope that the Government have laid to rest the myths about the take-up of eye tests. We are at the beginning of a new campaign to draw to people's attention the importance of looking after their eyes, and we hope to put the disagreements of the past behind us and work with the profession on a further campaign in the autumn.

An eye test costs less than an MOT, about the same as a haircut—or perhaps two if one shops around—and about the same as reading *The Sun* or *The Daily Mirror* one day a week for a year. Free NHS sight tests are

available to one in three of the population. We are confident that our policies of providing health care for those who need it, and ensuring that we have a preventive Health Service, are well and truly vindicated. I urge the House to reject the motion.

6.51 pm

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): I am saddened by the cheap and dismissive way in which the Minister ended her remarks. Occasionally, when debating the Government's health policies, we succeed in detecting some twisted logic or some vestige of reasoning. However, today's debate has confirmed yet again that there is no logic or sense—or any redeeming feature—in the imposition of eye-test charges. As my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) made clear at the beginning of the debate, there is overwhelming evidence that the Government's policy has proved every bit as devastating as we predicted in April 1989.

Today the Secretary of State attempted to bluff his way out of another disaster. His defence was based on a breathtaking dependence on a single opinion poll; and, by definition, an opinion poll reflects opinions rather than facts. His figures depend on retrospective analysis—which is not an accurate or a dependable method of dealing with this type of question—and on gratuitous insults aimed at an entire profession and at people who have genuinely tried to get at the truth. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) eloquently blasted him out of the water on that point.

The Secretary of State's figures fly in the face of all other available evidence. They were produced in a press release today in a desperate attempt to minimise the effect of this debate. He mentioned them reluctantly at the tail end of his speech, only after I challenged him to do so; they are no substitute for the proper figures and objective research that he and his colleagues have refused to produce over the past 15 months.

The Minister for Health added nothing except fine sentiments, which are not reflected in the actions of the Government and depend on the same flawed source. However, she contradicted the Secretary of State by acknowledging the validity of other evidence. She tried to re-announce a development implemented on 1 June.

The case is simple. Many people have been deterred by the charges. People are suffering, and some will go blind through serious eye conditions remaining undetected. Businesses are having to close because of the downturn in tests. Even those who are entitled to free tests are being deterred by the system that the Government have introduced.

This is not, as some Conservative Members try to suggest, a peripheral service for which a charge is appropriate: others, such as the hon. Member for Edgbaston, understand that. However, those who took and did not critically examine the brief from Conservative central office clearly do not understand. In today's debate, and over recent months, the ministerial response has been convoluted and the Government have tried to spread doubt and confusion. They have tried to say that we do not know what is happening. We need only read the blocking answers of the Minister for Health during recent months to recognise her single-minded determination not to know what is going on.

The Minister's colleague in another place, Baroness Hooper, was equally unhelpful, but rather more confident. When she was asked on 2 May about people entitled to free eye tests, she stated categorically:

"There is no change in the uptake of eye tests in that proportion of the population."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 2 May 1990; Vol. 518, c. 1039.]

Funnily enough, she did not have the benefit of the information that the Minister is re-using today. She is wrong.

The Minister has managed to cast a cloak of darkness and opinion over the English figures, but the figures in Wales were given to me in a parliamentary reply on 8 May. In the six months from 1 April 1989, the numbers almost halved, from 330,000 to 170,000—a truly devastating drop. The Welsh Health Minister tried to say that it might be due to more people's taking private tests, but that is not true: the House has had the facts. An independent survey by the Federation of Ophthalmic and Dispensing Opticians shows a drop of 36 per cent. The other figures referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston show the extent of the downturn across the country. Against that, the Government's own investigations offer no independent or substantial evidence for their case.

The Government say that there was bound to be a drop in the first couple of months after the charges were brought in. In April 1989, the Secretary of State for Scotland tried to suggest that a downturn after 1 April could be explained by people's success in rushing to beat the deadline. Apart from the curious logic of that, if charges will not deter, why should the lack of a charge and the imminence of an imposition cause an upturn? The history of events show that he was wrong. An increase of some 6·3 per cent. in the number of tests before 1 April hardly accounts for the drop of 36 per cent. recorded independently by the FODO, and certainly does nothing to balance the 49 per cent. drop in free tests reported by the Welsh Office.

The fact is that fewer people are having tests. Most serious of all is the evidence from Michael Bateman, the chairman of the FODO, who said:

"Since the introduction of the charges there has been an overall drop in the number of people going for eye checks, even amongst those who are still entitled to a free sight test under the NHS such as those on low incomes, diabetics, and relatives of glaucoma sufferers whose own sight could be at risk."

The Government's third attempt to confuse us is the suggestion that the figures produced by optometrists and independent sources may be inaccurate. There is overwhelming evidence that they are accurate. Opposition Members have asked questions—not dependent on those surveys—all round the country, and the evidence has mounted each time we have asked. Let us take referrals of new ophthalmology outpatients. The Welsh figures show a downturn late last year—just when one would expect reduced detection to follow the reduction in the number of eye tests—before the major increase in serious cases of which we are now hearing. In Pembrokeshire, for instance, there was a drop from 424 to 296.

The hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett)—who intervened briefly at the beginning of the debate, although he is not here now—may like to know that Mr. Nick Ainger, who will join us on the Labour Benches after the next general election, rang me last night to tell me the views of opticians in his area. One optician told of an elderly lady who went to see him yesterday. She had not had an eye test since 1976; she was blind in one eye and

[Mr. Alun Michael]

losing sight in another. She said that she had been reluctant to come in because of the cost of spectacles, as she is not on income supplement. How many like her have still not reached the point of desperation when they cast aside their financial worries and take a test?

That optician reported a downturn of nearly 25 per cent. since last April. He believes that the Government should give free eye tests to all retired people now. Another optician in Pembroke dock says that pensioners who are not on income support are failing to turn up for appointments because of the charges. The same is true of unemployed people who are not on income support—perhaps because a member of the family is working—but whose family financial problems are nevertheless acute.

The Secretary of State claimed earlier that we still pay for one third of the population. He is wrong: one third may be eligible, but they may also be deterred. In Holyhead, near where I was born, an optician confirmed yesterday that he has experienced a downturn of 40 per cent. An independent sample undertaken by HTV Wales showed a drop of 47·5 per cent. in Carmarthen and a drop of 39·8 per cent. in one of the most deprived areas of the country, the Cynon Valley. However, the problems are not limited to poorer areas: similar figures were produced by an independent survey by the Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster family practitioner committee.

After I had illustrated the situation in Wales I received a letter that graphically illustrates what charging means—it is not just about figures. An optician passed to me a letter that he had received from the father of a 19-year-old student who was not exempt from the eyesight charges. The optician told me that she therefore had to pay, which fortunately she could, but that others would be deterred. The letter reads:

> "Dear Sir,
>
> On Thursday 22nd February at 12.30 pm my daughter had an appointment to see the optician to have her eyes tested. He noticed that there was something wrong at the back of her eye and told her to go to the doctor. This she did, and was admitted to hospital on the same day and was operated on a few days later for the removal of a brain tumour. I should like to thank the optician for his prompt action—he probably saved my daughter's life."

I am sure that we would all like to thank the professional opticians who detect such conditions. They deserve more respect than was shown to them by the Secretary of State today. I am told that such cases are far from unusual. Far better than thanks would be an announcement from the Minister that the dogmatic experiment of charging for eye tests has proved a disaster and that that dogmatic charging will be abandoned forthwith.

You, Mr. Speaker, will know the prayer:

> "Grant me the serenity to accept things I cannot change, the courage to change things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

The Government have the power to make the necessary change and the Prime Minister should have the wisdom to revert to the decision not to go ahead with the charges which she justified in a letter of 23 June 1980, saying that it was

> "in reponse to strong representations that such a charge, in a service which has a preventative function, would be wrong in principle and could deter patients from seeking professional advice"

Those comments apply as strongly today as they did at any other time, but this time she and her Government have pressed ahead against all available advice and evidence. This time the charge has been brought in and that charge has now deterred—it will go on deterring. It remains wrong in principle and the Government should remove eye test charges now.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 209, Noes 275.

Division No. 224] **[7.01 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mlne E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dover, Den
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kilfedder, James
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Leadbitter, Ted
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert

McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Ross, William *(Londonderry E)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Sillars, Jim
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Martyn Jones and
Mrs. Llin Golding.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl'Y's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Cope, Rt Hon John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, David
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Price, Sir David
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*

Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alastair Goodlad and
Mr. Tony Durant.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MR. SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House supports the Government in its view that those who can afford to pay for sight tests should do so and that the money which was previously spent by the National Health Service on free sight tests for those who could afford to pay is better spent in other ways in improving health care; believes that this will not lead to the nation's health or sight being put at risk nor deter those from seeking sight tests who need them; and fully supports the Government's policy that sight tests paid for by the National Health Service should continue to be available to those on low income, children and those most at risk of blindness from diabetes and glaucoma.

Welfare of Children

7.16 pm

Miss Joan Lestor (Eccles): I beg to move,

That this House deplores the damage to children resulting from eleven years of Conservative governments, whose pursuit of socially divisive policies has seriously undermined the domestic security and future prospects of millions of children; calls on the Government fully to acknowledge its responsibilities towards all children through a fundamental re-assessment of service provision to children by recognising the need for substantially increased levels of co-ordination at both national and local government level; further requires the Government to facilitate the national collation and interpretation of information about children through the establishment of information-gathering mechanisms and continued support for existing systems; and urges the Government to bring before this House a timetable for ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, as a sign of its commitment to improving the welfare of children, both within the United Kingdom and elsewhere.

Mr. Speaker: I must announce to the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

Miss Lestor: In setting what I hope will be the scene of this debate on children, I should like the House to cast its mind back to 1975 when the Prime Minister said in a speech in New York:

"Let our children grow tall, and some grow taller than others if they have it in them to do so. Opportunity means nothing, unless it includes the right to be unequal."

We little thought then that this "right" to inequality would be enshrined in law as a result of policy decisions taken by successive Conservative Governments in the past decade.

We have recently been subjected to many fine words, albeit dangerously oversimplifying the issues affecting children. I urge the House not to pay too much attention to what the Government say, but to look at what they have done, because there is a substantial, if predictable, gap between the myth of a caring Government and the reality experienced by many of our children.

The Tory party is fond of claiming to be the party of the family, yet it is the same party which, during a decade of government, has taken policy decisions after policy decisions which have divided families and not supported them. I shall give a few brief examples, starting with unemployment. The Conservative Government deliberately engineered appallingly high unemployment, thus throwing millions into dependency on state benefits. A generation of Thatcher's children have gone from childhood to adulthood without experience of their parents being in work and without any job prospects of their own.

Do hon. Members remember the saying, "On your bike"? What was that advice meant to achieve? It meant a parent, more often than not a father, being absent from home for long periods actively seeking work in other parts of the United Kingdom—a stranger to his children and subjecting his marriage to intolerable strains.

When do the Government intend to sort out the tangible contradictions in their approach to families and members of those families? There is an increasing tendency in Government circles to browbeat some members of the family to stay put at all costs. For example, 16 to 18-year-olds are supposed to stay with their families or face unacceptable levels of financial hardship, making it virtually impossible for them to lead an independent life at a decent level. If their parents are unemployed, they can no

longer, thanks to Government action, claim these young people as dependants. If such young people are not on a youth training scheme, they will not get any benefit.

Younger children running away from home are dubbed dreamers who are chasing the bright city lights, but many of them are running away from shocking domestic pressure, overcrowding, violence, sexual abuse and other problems. Many of these children are throwaways, not runaways. Only recently the Prime Minister expressed horror at the idea that we might be in danger of rearing a generation of creche children. She told us that women with young children should stay at home and raise their family. It would be nice if most women had that choice. The Prime Minister had that choice and she took it.

However, child benefit has been frozen since 1987, and there were hints in the press over the weekend that it is likely to remain at that level. In many areas, including Conservative-controlled authorities, mothers are finding that child benefit, their only directly paid benefit, barely pays their monthly poll tax bill.

Ministers other than the Prime Minister have expended much energy and effort trying to persuade women to return to work to meet the needs of industry. The Government should get together to decide what they want. If women are to be encouraged to return to work, I shall support that, as someone who was a working mother when the children were young.

It is wrong for us to rely on workplace nurseries for child care. Child care needs to be child centred, and it should take into account the needs of children. If we rely on child care for working mothers, what will happen when the country decides that it no longer needs those mothers in the work force, as it has done in the past? If that happens, child care will disappear, as it did at the end of the second world war. Children are caught in the middle of Government confusion. Have they benefited from the decade of supposedly unprecedented prosperity or has the economic miracle passed them by?

The Prime Minister has said that the Victorian era had much to commend it. We can see what it was like, for some of it has returned with a vengeance. For a minority of our children there are slum dwellings, child working and an increase in social inequalities. The Children's Society says that 98,000 children cease to sleep at home on any one night. Of course, many of these children turn up unharmed, but many do not. Government information —what happened to the children who ran away from home and why they did so—is scant. That is not my view alone. Since taking on the portfolio of Labour's spokesperson for children—it is not a soft option as one or two members of the press have suggested—I have had intensive consultations with voluntary organisations, professional bodies and individuals who are actively involved in caring for children. The same picture emerges. There is a clear and increasing tendency for the Government to rely on the voluntary sector to pick up the pieces, the damaged children for whom they and society—I know that "society" is not the Prime Minister's favourite word—are responsible. Any Government who are serious about taking on that responsibility must begin with a thorough understanding of the problem, and that means national information gathering.

The House may find it significant that many of the statistics that I shall use have come from non-Government sources. I pay tribute to the Children's Society, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, the Save the Children Fund, the National Children's Home, the National Children's Bureau, Barnardos, the Child Poverty Action Group, the Health Visitors Association and many other organisations for filling the vital information gap.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Miss Lestor: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman, but I do not intend to give way for long. We rarely debate these issues and I do not have much time.

Mr. Taylor: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for giving way. She has mentioned some eminent and worthy charities, all of which do an excellent job. That job, even by their own admission, has been helped by the Government's generous tax arrangements for charitable giving. It is the charities which deal with the problem and which know best how to deal with it, and we fully support them.

Miss Lestor: When I have asked Ministers for information and statistics on missing children, children who are sleeping out and truancy, I have been told that the Government do not collect such statistics or I have been referred to one of the agencies. Surely hon. Members have the right to receive Government information about what is going on.

I shall draw attention to a striking exception to the rule which I have just enunciated. There is a piece of Government-funded research that is proving indispensable for those who are genuinely concerned about the health and welfare of the younger generation. I refer to the long-term study of the health of primary schoolchildren, which was set up after the Prime Minister, in a previous guise, abolished free school milk. The nationwide study of 10,000 children is being carried out by St. Thomas's hospital within the medical sector. It has produced valuable information on children's height, weight and general health. I am advised that, although it is regarded worldwide as a model of its kind, there is the threat of withdrawal of funding next April, despite the fact that the study is revealing what has happened to underprivileged groups in society. It seems that the trend in the 1970s towards more equal birth rates across the social spectrum is now, after 10 years of Conservative government, in reverse. Surely that could not be a cause for the Department of Health to get cold feet. I ask for an assurance from the Minister for Health that the rumour to which I have referred has no foundation and that the research will continue.

I have no doubt that the Minister will wish to assure the House also that the Government are doing all that they can to achieve higher welfare standards for our children. I am sure that the hon. Lady will say that the Government have spent X million pounds on this and a further Y million pounds on that, but their policy is obviously not working.

The Child Poverty Action Group demonstrated recently that millions of people, including children, are still getting a poor deal from the rich society and that the famous trickle-down theory of economic growth working over the long term is irrelevant to the needs of children now. Our children cannot wait.

When we get a significant and potentially powerful tool of legislation that can be used to help children who are in need, such as the Children Act 1989—I am pleased that the Government refer to the Act in their amendment—there

[Miss Lestor]

are difficulties when it comes to implementation. It was said that the Act would lead to an improvement in court hearings, but we did not get family courts, although we fought hard to secure them. The need for such courts was agreed by many hon. Members on both sides of the House. The Act is in danger of being sabotaged by the Government's refusal to provide adequate extra resources to help local authorities to implement it. According to a survey conducted by the Association of Metropolitan Authorities, local government will have to find as much as £150 million a year to implement the Act. What is the use of raising hopes and expectations as a result of our knowledge of the needs of children—that knowledge forced the Government to introduce the Act—if we are not to give local authorities the money to implement it? In these days of poll tax and capped councils, where is local government to find the necessary finance to put much-needed legislation into practice? The local authority within my constituency tells me that it will cost it £450,000 a year to implement the Act. Will the authority be capped if it increases the poll tax to pay for implementation? That is what the Government are saying. High spending are dirty words only if the money is squandered. If money is well spent on services that are needed, and the Children Act has shown a need, it becomes indispensable.

It is especially relevant that we are debating the welfare of children during National Sleep-out Week, which is designed to highlight the plight of people, including many young people and children, who are forced to sleep rough on the streets or in bus shelters, alleyways or cardboard boxes. The plight of homeless young people distresses us all. It is a visible sign of our failure to deal with a range of social and domestic problems that give many youngsters no choice but to leave home or local authority care. Many of these youngsters—a few as young as nine or 10 years—find temporary shelter courtesy of the voluntary organisations. The Centrepoint refuge found a doubling of the number of young people sleeping rough between 1987 and 1989 and suggests that the main cause is the absence of cheap accommodation and the young people's unwillingness, often because of fear, to return to the place from which they came. Most sinister is the finding of a group that is campaigning for the end of the Vagrancy Act 1824. It draws attention to an increase of more than 230 per cent. in arrests under the Act of young people who are sleeping on the streets.

That legislation was passed in 1824 to "deal with" veterans of the Napoleonic wars who exposed their wounds in order to solicit money from passers-by. One hundred and sixty-six years later it is used to criminalise young homeless people. Why? Under that Act, sleeping out is a crime, as is asking the public for money. Under more recent Government legislation, 16 to 18-year-olds not living at home or on YTS programmes are not eligible for state financial support. What kind of Government is it who force youngsters to beg in order to survive, make them criminals when they do so, and further criminalise them when they have to sleep rough for lack of money?

A disproportionate number of these young people have run away from care; some agencies suggest that the figure is as high as 40 per cent. We must examine where and why our care system is failing them. A similarly high proportion have told voluntary workers that they were subjected to physical or sexual abuse at home, in school or in care, and cannot go home. I take this opportunity to express my concern about one particular aspect of child protection. I refer to the vetting of adults applying for jobs that will bring them into close contact with children. We have all been appalled by cases of children who were placed in care as a refuge from something that occurred in their background and who have then been further abused while in that care.

The Association of Metropolitan Authorities' recent survey on vetting procedures makes alarming reading. It reports delays ranging from three weeks to 10 weeks in some areas. At least one hon. Member has publicly criticised the police for unnecessary and bureaucratic delay, but the picture is not that simple. That police are at full stretch, trying to cope with the greatly increased demand on vetting services. That demand has arisen, rightly, from heightened awareness of the need to extend the protection of children.

In 1987-88, almost half a million inquiries were processed in response to requests from local authority departments, social service departments, probation services, and health authorities. Fewer than 400 requests were received from the Department of Education and Science on behalf of independent schools. Without a Government commitment to provide additional resources, the police will either have to resign themselves to an ever-lengthening backlog of inquiries or to providing a restricted and less than thorough service.

All that is at a time when the Government are encouraging education authorities—especially those in inner city areas—to advertise abroad for qualified teachers to plug staffing gaps. Some European countries provide their nationals with a certificate of good conduct, but not all. Can the Minister for Health confirm, by making inquiries among her colleagues, that the Department of Education and Science provides no guidelines to local education authorities as to the countries in which they should advertise for teaching staff, bearing in mind the important point that reciprocal arrangements exist in some? Do the Government have any plans for extending international co-operation between police forces after 1992, further to safeguard children from potential harm when they are in educational or caring establishments, given that there will be more open access to people from abroad to work in them?

In 1988-89, 2 million children were living in families on income support. Given the acknowledged inadequacies of state benefits, there can be no doubt that those children were, and still are, living in poverty. The children in single-parent families are likely to be worse off. Today, about 1 million lone parents, 90 per cent. of them women, are bringing up 1·6 million children—or 13 per cent. of all the children in the United Kingdom. About 65 per cent. of lone parents are dependent on income support—double the number of a decade ago. Most single parents are discouraged from working for reasons that include the high cost of child care, compelling them to seek a wage far higher than that which they are likely to obtain. They also risk the loss or reduction of housing benefits, the loss of free school meals, and of other concessions that they have when claiming income support. The low level of child benefit is another factor. The children of families living on benefits are at risk of poverty, and the link between poverty and reception into care is very strong.

The Government's most recent figures show that £9 million annually is being spent on preventive work, in trying to keep families together. I approve of that work, but £434 million was spent on fostering and residential care. Something is radically wrong.

A large number of children in this country are on at-risk registers. Latest figures for the London area show that between 400 and 600 children on at-risk registers have no social worker attached to them because there are insufficient staff to do that work. That underclass of child is not only poor but likely to be malnourished. We pay insufficient attention to food poverty. By and large, it is as true today as it was a century ago that a child's health and diet are dependent on its parents' economic status—with the notable exception of some middle-class parents who force-feed beefburgers to their children.

It is no use suggesting that families can work their way out of poverty and that they have only to get jobs for all to be well. Although some new jobs are being created, many of them are very low paid. People are now earning their poverty—receiving less in pay than the value of the supplementary benefits for which they would be eligible if unemployed. The Maternity Alliance report on poverty and pregnancy examined the cost of an adequate diet for expectant mothers. It found that many pregnant women faced serious difficulties in affording the kind of diet recommended by hospitals. The diet was costed at £15·88 per week in 1988—more than one quarter of income support for an unemployed couple expecting their first baby, and more than half the income support for a single woman aged 24 expecting her first baby. What was the use of the 1977 DHSS report that said:

"An inadequate diet before and during pregnancy may impair the growth of the baby and put at risk the health of both mother and child"?

In 1990, it is still women on low incomes, but especially unsupported mothers, whose babies face the greatest risk of being born underweight or of an early death.

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Miss Lestor: I did not intend to give way again. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will be called.

Our debates on the Broadcasting Bill have featured some striking omissions in respect of children, including the advertising of sweets, food and drinks on children's television. Recently, I accompanied a delegation to the IBA on behalf of dentists and nutritionists to protest at the amount of advertising of sugar-rich food and sweets. According to one food magazine, more than half of all advertisements on children's television encouraged an unhealthy and mainly sugary diet. Bearing in mind the large number of hours that children spend watching television, the IBA's code of practice is clearly failing to protect them. It is time the Government got tough and brought Britain into line with other European countries. Our guidelines are among the weakest in Europe. No encouragement is given to advertisers to relate proper teeth-cleaning habits or to promote the eating of decent foods. The health of our children should take precedence over commercial interests.

The same argument applies to child road safety and to the important hold that the road lobby seems to have over the present Government. More than 120 children are killed or injured on our roads each day. Road accidents are the leading cause of death among school-age children. We have the second worst record of child road deaths in Europe. We need to know more about those accidents if we are to prevent further loss of life or injury.

Is poor housing, with inadequate play space, to blame? The National Playing Fields Association expressed concern last year at the ever-increasing commercial exploitation of land, insensitive planning and lack of awareness combining to threaten outdoor recreational space. The association says in its 1989 report:

"Too many playing fields and play grounds are deteriorating or disappearing altogether"

and that far too many major housing developments are created with inadequate green space, especially for children to play in. Are we taking any notice of such observations? Three fifths of all road accidents involving pre-school children occurred in the street less than 100 yards from the home. Do we plan for children when building new road systems? Eighty-five per cent. of casualties occur in built-up areas.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): Eighty-five per cent. of children live in built-up areas. What a stupid remark.

Miss Lestor: Over the past decade—*[Interruption.]* I do not know why Conservative Members find child deaths funny. I do not. I find them appalling. I agree with the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) that they have been making stupid remarks. I am glad to have the hon. Gentleman on my side. His hon. Friends have been making stupid remarks. Child deaths are not funny, and the fact that 85 per cent. of child deaths in roads occur in built-up areas needs to be studied.

Mr. Humfrey Malins (Croydon, North-West): That is where they live.

Miss Lestor: Yes, I agree with the hon. Gentleman, that is where they live. If areas are built up to such an extent that children are killed, we should study the planning of such areas and decide to do something about it.

In the past decade we have seen increasing Government support for the arguments put forward by the pro-road lobby at the cost of young lives. The Secretary of State for Transport announced earlier this year that substantial sums would be allocated to new road-building programmes. What proportion of that is going towards road safety? I have submitted a written question on the matter and I am still waiting for an answer.

Children also need protection in the home. The impact of poverty on young lives can have a profound and damaging effect on children's life chances. We can now see evidence—although not yet Government evidence—of how children are being used to prop up the state. It is estimated that between 10,000 and 20,000 young people and children are carers of dependent adults. Many more will have taken on a substantial part of the responsibility for looking after brothers and sisters. Financial, practical and emotional help for such youngsters is grossly inadequate, and the Labour party is currently considering ways in which we can meet the needs of that special category of children.

We must reject the attitudes which lay behind the comment from one social services chairman that it was good training for a 10-year-old girl to get up three or for times in a night to help her disabled mother. Something is going wrong. Such children do an adult's work for no pay.

Many more children work illegally for low pay and as many as one in three children between the ages of 11 and

[Miss Lestor]

15 works outside school hours. It is estimated that 8 per cent. of them work illegally; they work too many hours. That is between 1 million and 2 million children.

Poverty and adult unemployment mean that all too frequently such children are the only breadwinner in the family, transforming at a stroke working for pocket money into an essential element of the family budget. The Anti Slavery Society, Defence for Children International and other organisations have carried out studies which show that many children work longer hours than adults, often doing two jobs, one before and one after school. Those are the children who are tired at school, frequently go absent for short periods of time and fail to reach expected educational standards. When are the Government going to implement the Employment of Children Act 1973?

I do not have time, bearing in mind what I told you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to go into many other matters. Truancy is on the increase both among younger and older children and how such children spend their time causes great concern to all agencies.

Last November the United Nations adopted a convention on the rights of the child. At its heart lies the recognition that each child is a valuable and unique individual. It stressed the need to balance the child's right to security, protection, education and nurture with its right to be listened to, responded to and respected. Seven months later we are still waiting for a timetable for its ratification by the House. Why are we waiting so long?

I was involved in some of the discussions on the convention on the rights of the child and I noticed that in this country people's thoughts usually flew to Third world children where extreme poverty and underdevelopment deny them security, education, proper nurturing and protection, where they are exploited and abused, and live and work in the streets, robbed of their childhood. Many die before they have a chance to live. However, this country is neither poor nor underdeveloped. We have no such excuse.

7.44 pm

The Minister for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'welcomes the major programme of work in the child care and child protection field which the Government are overseeing and undertaking in co-operation with local government and the voluntary sector, backed up by the Children Act 1989, which will establish an improved court system for children and a new balance between public support of children within their families and action to protect children from abuse and neglect, and families from unwarranted intrusion by the state; and welcomes other initiatives such as the reformed system of social security which targets help more effectively on the least well off among families with children.'.

Children are the key to our future and the true wealth of our nation. They are our most sacred trust. The Government are committed to encouraging responsible attitudes towards the care and upbringing of children and to providing a framework for health, community, education and social services. Wherever possible, we want to enable families to provide for their children's welfare. When necessary, others need also to be able to assist or to intervene.

The Government undertake to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This is an issue of profound concern to all of us. We want to take forward thinking and action on children's issues. We already have a record of achievement. This debate provides a welcome opportunity to set out our far-reaching programme.

I have already had discussions with the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) on a number of subjects, and I do not for one moment doubt her sincerity about the needs of children, but it is important that the Government should set a framework within which we can work with local authorities. Above all, children belong in families and in communities. We have to spread that sense of responsibility and awareness of children's needs throughout society. It is a source of regret, although scarcely surprise, that so often the hon. Lady should have sought to make rather petty party political capital out of a subject on which, frankly, there are many areas of broad agreement.

The way to provide for the financial side of the welfare of children, as for other vulnerable groups, is to establish a flourishing economy.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Social Security, who will wind up the debate, will be speaking in greater detail about some of the benefits that are available to families.

Few doubt the commitment of the Opposition to children, but we all have every reason to doubt their ability to deliver. Under the Government, over the past 10 years, families have seen major improvements in their living standards. There has been a 34 per cent. increase in the real value of take-home pay for a married man on average earnings with two children, compared with an increase of less than 1 per cent. under the last Labour Government.

This year nearly £10 billion is being spent on the whole range of benefits for the family. In real terms that is an increase of more than a quarter since 1979. Under the Labour party, financial support for the family was cut by nearly 10 per cent. in real terms in six miserable years.

The reforms of the social security system have rightly concentrated help on those most in need. This year £5·4 billion is going in social security payments to low-income families—the third year running when these families have seen real increases in income-related benefits.

Family credit, which was born out of the previous family income supplement, is a major initiative which was brought forward by my noble Friend Lord Joseph and is paid to the mothers in almost all cases. It is important in ensuring that working families do not lose out as they cross the threshold between unemployment and work and as they climb the income ladder. The average award is more than £27 a week and family credit now goes to more than 300,000 families—nearly half as many again as were helped under the old family income supplement. Twice as much help is being given now.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): I wonder what the Minister would say to one of my constituents who, when she applied to the social fund for her expected baby's needs, was told that she could have money for a cot or a pram but not for both. Is that something which would have happened at any time before the Government came to power? I cannot remember anything like it—unless we look back to the years before 1945.

Mrs. Bottomley: Unlike the hon. Lady—or perhaps like her—I spent many years before entering this place working with precisely those families who were grappling with the

social security system. I worked for the Child Poverty Action Group, and I had the most enormous and overwhelming difficulty getting any kind of civilised or courteous handling for such families under the Labour Government. However, I would not seek to make any capital out of that.

In the provision of welfare services, difficult assessments have to be made. Low-income families can be confident that they have seen their benefits and incomes rise. The Opposition, as we have said time and time again, are not short of rhetoric but are devoid of the ability to turn that rhetoric into reality.

It is not my view, or that of the Government, that resources are the only issue. We also believe that children require the protection of legislation. It is a major tragedy of our society that still there are children in our country who are neglected and abused and whose needs are not being met. We take considerable pride in the Children Act 1989, which was the work of my predecessor, my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor). It has placed on the statute book an integrated legislative framework which balances the needs of the child, parents and local authorities. We are working closely with local authority associations and voluntary organisations to make sure that the necessary guidance and training is in place. It is the first attempt to establish a unified and consistent code of law covering the care and upbringing of children in both the private and the public sectors. This is but the first of a series of reforms of family law.

We have begun a review of the law on adoption. We are expecting proposals from the Law Commission to reform the law on divorce and domestic violence.

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): My hon. Friend has extolled the progress that has been made under this Government which, examined by any rational person, can be seen to be great compared with the sanctimonious words that were uttered earlier this evening. However, will my hon. Friend verify that some of the progress that we have tried to make by means of legislation could come adrift if some Government agencies are not sure about the purpose of the legislation? I ask her to consider the fact that Customs and Excise is making life difficult for those who offer a fostering service to more than three children by insisting that they should register for VAT. The Inland Revenue has been helpful and sympathetic but Customs and Excise has not. That is an example of the Government's intentions not always being fulfilled by a Government agency that is not helping those who foster and who may subsequently adopt children in need.

Mrs. Bottomley: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his concern. If he will give me more details about those cases, I shall look into them.

I have referred to the important progress that we have made in trying to clarify and establish a legal framework that pays better regard to the needs of children. Those of us who have long deplored the needlessly destructive effects of the legal process on families welcome this progress towards an integrated structure of family law. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Eccles has had to leave the Chamber, since she stressed that point.

The Children Act sets new standards in child care. The welfare of the child is paramount and must underpin any decision that a court makes about the care and upbringing of children. The Act specifically requires the court to consider the child's wishes and feelings, its physical and emotional needs, the likely effect of changed circumstances and whether the parents are capable of meeting the child's needs. The Act explicitly recognises that the child's welfare requires separate consideration from any rights or needs of the parents. We replace terms such as "parental rights and duties" with the concept of parental responsibility—a responsibility that persists through divorce, separation or care. It can be relinquished only if the child is adopted.

The new range of court orders concentrates the minds of parents on their continuing responsibility for the upbringing of the child in family proceedings. The hon. Member for Eccles did not refer to the responsibilities of parents. We recognise that there is a role for Government and local authorities and that often there is a central role for voluntary organisations, which have done so much to improve child care, but we believe strongly that parents, above all, have a responsibility and that legal processes should never inadvertently undermine their role.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): I waited to intervene until the Minister had completed her remarks about the Children Act. I am disappointed that she has not responded to the request of my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) to talk about resources. All those who are involved with the implementation of the Children Act are concerned about adequate resources being made available for the purpose. When the Bill was considered in Committee emphasis was placed on the fact that additional resources would be needed. Already there are huge backlogs over the registration of child minders, day nurseries and private facilities because social services departments have been unable to employ sufficient people to complete their registration. What do the Government intend to do about that?

Mrs. Bottomley: I have not remotely come to the end of my remarks on the Children Act. I shall certainly deal with the implementation process and with the specific point made by the hon. Member for Eccles. Each year we have discussions with local authority associations about the challenges that they face. The resource implications of the Children Act were recognised by the Government. During this year's public expenditure discussions with local authorities we are considering whether additional resources will be needed. Some of them were referred to by the hon. Member for Eccles, such as the resource implications of those leaving care. The hon. Lady has a great interest in the working of the Children Act and I recognise her concern.

I return to the question that unites my hon. Friends —the responsibility of parents. Too often, under present arrangements, court orders treat children as though they were possessions to be fought over, along with the car and the microwave. The Act makes it clear that the child's religious persuasion, racial origin—a matter of concern to the hon. Member for Eccles—and cultural life and linguistic background should be taken into account in decisions affecting the child. Once again, recognition of the child's needs is central.

Mr. Wilshire: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is truly amazing that in her 28-minute speech the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) made no mention of the role of parents in the welfare of children, or of the role of parents in terms of accepting responsibility for their children? Is it

[Mr. Wilshire]

not much more practical and realistic to ask ourselves about the responsibility of parents instead of knocking the Government and offering no alternative policies?

Mrs. Bottomley: The role of parents is fundamental. I have made it clear on many occasions that their role is not properly recognised. I think that both sides agree about the duty of local authorities under the Children Act to safeguard the welfare of children within the family, wherever possible. All hon. Members agree that, ideally, local authorities should not intervene only in order to remove a child; they should safeguard the child's place within the family. That is one purpose of the legislation.

Lord Joseph referred to the cycle of deprivation. He has made a continual and valuable contribution to the debate on the role of the family. The title of his most recent work, "The Rewards of Parenthood", speaks for itself. The background against which a child grows up is fundamental. Children require stability, continuity and affection as much as they need food, shelter and education. Some parents require help to cope with their child's demands. Bringing up children is no easy task. Individual children and circumstances present different challenges to different parents. No other role calls for the range of talents and sustained commitment that parenthood requires.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I draw the Minister's attention to a particular difficulty—what is going on in the Hong Kong camps. Britain has responsibility for that colony. I visited various camps last week under the auspices of the Hong Kong Government. I saw thousands of children in a camp holding 22,000 people on an eight-acre site. They were living in indescribable squalor behind metal bars and barbed wire. The psychologists and psychiatrists who visited the camp have reported that those children will be damaged for life. What do the Government intend to do about the conditions under which they live? Those children are being damaged. They are the responsibility of the British Government and it is all happening under the Union Jack. What are the Government going to do about it? I was besieged by people in those camps asking for a response from the British Government.

Mrs. Bottomley: Hon. Members will agree that it was wrong for me to give way to the hon. Gentleman. It is clear that the Government are deeply committed to resolving the situation in Hong Kong, but it is far from easy. The Opposition have naive aspirations with no possible mechanism for translating their pious hopes into policies and arrangements that can deliver the assistance that is required. I do not intend to give way any further.

Prevention of family breakdown is always better than cure. Volunteer or befriending schemes can help families to deal with difficulties, and a professional social worker or agency does not necessarily need to become involved. We particularly applaud the work of the home start consultancy, but others such as NEWPIN are being funded out of our £2 million under-fives initiative that is directed particularly towards assisting the voluntary sector. Similarly, the development of family centres in recent years has done much to promote informal networks. I know that many hon. Members support a range of professional and voluntary organisations that play a crucial role.

The hon. Member for Eccles spoke about the needs of children leaving care. There is not doubt that leaving care without adequate support and proper arrangements can easily exacerbate a child's difficulties. A recent report has suggested that something like one third of the homeless youngsters on the streets of London were previously in care. The House will know that we are looking carefully at the problem of homelessness among young people. It is a complex, multi-faceted problem. It is not a question of vagrancy legislation or the particular arrangement of social security benefits. The Children Act placed a new duty on local authorities to advise, assist and befriend each child that they look after with a view to promoting his welfare when he leaves care. We fund a number of voluntary organisations to assist in that important work.

The number of women joining the work force is growing, and it is estimated that women will take up to 90 per cent. of the additional jobs that will be created between now and the end of the century. We firmly believe that parents should decide for themselves whether both parents or which parent should work when their children are young or still dependent.

A variety of day care services for pre-school and school-age children should be available so that parents may choose which best meets their children's needs. In the past 10 years there has been a rapid expansion in day care provision—a 90 per cent. increase in the number of children placed with child minders. In the debate about workplace nurseries I hope that none will overlook the important contribution made by child minders who can provide a continuity of care and stability that many other arrangements cannot. There has been a 75 per cent. increase in day nursery places, and all will welcome the recent concession from my right hon. Friend the Chancellor to assist with workplace nurseries.

There has been an 18 per cent. increase in playgroup places. Playgroups provide help and day experience for 400,000 children each year. It is the most popular and widely used system for providing activity during the day for pre-school children and has the unique characteristic of providing encouragement, support and collaborative experience for the parents about whom my hon. Friends feel so strongly. In Britain 86 per cent. of all three to five-year-olds benefit from some form of day care or educational provision. Few other countries rival our record—only France and Belgium do—and the Netherlands is the only other country in the Community where children start compulsory full-time education at the age of five.

We believe that central Government have a role in establishing a legislative framework to regulate day care services, to issue general guidance on standards and quality and to test out new initiatives.

We see local authorities not as the monopolistic providers of day care, but increasingly as enablers. They have an important strategic and co-ordinating role to bring together local authority agencies, employers and voluntary groups to ensure that in each area adequate provision can be made for the growing number of children whose parents wish them to benefit from some form of pre-school experience or day care.

The hon. Lady mentioned a scourge on modern life. It is a source of perplexity and great concern that in an age

of unprecedented prosperity we continue to have in our midst children who are the subject of abuse. We have faced a series of harrowing tragedies where children have suffered or lost their lives at the hands of their parents. However, we have made substantial progress in child protection.

I am sure that the hon. Lady is well aware when reporting the number of children on at—risk registers that the figures are difficult to interpret. It is welcome that more neighbours, relations and parents are coming forward to suggest that children are at risk. The statistics have to be interpreted with some subtlety. We plan to reissue the document, "Working Together" which emphasises the central importance of collaboration between agencies. Time and again in child abuse cases the lack of inter-agency collaboration, co-operation and communication was a major source of the child's tragedy. Assisted by the National Children's Home, we are looking to set up a treatment initiative to study the range of treatment facilities currently available for abused children and young perpetrators of abuse. We plan to publish a further study of child abuse inquiry reports. So often the facts are recited at a major inquiry, but we wish to ensure that those facts and lessons are properly disseminated and learnt.

Above all, we recognise that effective training underpins good practice. The Department is devoting £19·4 million to its training support programme including £2·5 million for training on the Children Act and just over £7·3 million for training in child care and child protection. That will be of major assistance to local authorities and will ensure that those which continue to have difficulties —such as the ones to which the hon. Lady referred—can recruit and retain the staff that are so important in providing the necessary care.

Inevitably, co-ordination within Government is important. It is achieved through well-established interdepartmental liaison and working. There is scarcely a Department that does not have some responsibility or involvement with children. We want a co-ordinated, effective and comprehensive approach to child care policy. The interdepartmental group on child abuse was set up in March 1987. Its work is effective and it meets regularly to make further progress.

In the provision of day care, I chair the interdepartmental consultative group on provision of services for under-fives which regularly meets the local authority associations and voluntary bodies. It also includes the Department of Education and Science, the Home Office, the Department of Employment, the Department of the Environment, the Ministry of Defence and the Scottish and Welsh Offices. The ministerial group on women's issues, so ably chaired by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office, has addressed itself to improving child care options. Recently, a number of initiatives have been set in hand: encouraging the establishment of a national association for commercial consultancies and providers, the Childcare Association; funding work on a new "kitemark" scheme for nurseries and consultancies to give further reassurance to parents; and encouraging schools to provide day care facilities after school hours or during holidays.

At a more recent meeting we set in hand the further provision that will shortly be produced by my Department of the new guidelines and regulations to local authorities on day care for children under eight on which we work closely with the Department of Education and Science. The programme includes our work with local authorities to help them improve their practice on the registration of day care and the development of information services. When parents require services, they often require the information on how those services can best meet their and their children's needs. Our programme also aims to encourage employers to become involved in providing help with child care for their staff. There is an important role for employers who want to ensure that they can retain their work force as we move towards demographic change. It is important to build them into the partnership. Within Government, we are setting an example. At the last count, 26 Departments had their own holiday play schemes. We believe in example as well as exhortation.

Children's health is an important matter. There has been a continuing improvement in children's health over the past decade. The infant mortality rate and the various associated rates are key indicators not only of the state of maternal and child health and of NHS services but of national well-being. The figures for 1989 are particularly encouraging, showing the rates at their lowest-ever levels. Infant mortality is down from 12·8 to 8·4 per 1,000 births in the past 10 short years; perinatal mortality is down from just over 14 to just over eight per 1,000 births; and neonatal mortality is also down. This is a credit to all those working in the Health Service. It is a stimulus to further improvements in our services.

We are not complacent. Local figures vary between social and ethnic groups. A major initiative which we announced last year in our reply to the Social Services Committee's report on perinatal, neonatal and infant mortality is designed to help us understand better the reasons for these local variations. Efforts must be more closely targeted to securing their reduction. We are seeking an even better performance. All regional health authorities have been asked to introduce regional epidemiological surveys of stillbirths and neonatal deaths. Each needs at least one paediatric pathologist in post to conduct a review of the need for further posts. Why do particular babies die? What more might be done to prevent their deaths? The confidential inquiry into stillbirths will have an important part to play. These initiatives include a critical review by the Medical Research Council of research into a problem that has caused great concern to many hon. Members—cot death, or sudden infant death syndrome.

Spending on maternity services increased by 16 per cent. in real terms between 1980 and 1988. Nursing and midwifery staff in the key areas of special and neonatal intensive care have increased. We have made progress on many other fronts. The hon. Member for Eccles referred to the source of the greatest number of deaths of young children by accidents—road traffic accidents. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) who has aimed to make everyone aware of the importance of belting up in the back and taking responsibility for children in cars. The Department of Transport recently launched a child road safety campaign in which the NHS is committed to playing its part.

The GP contract is another opportunity to provide better care for children. For the first time, child health surveillance becomes an option from the GP as well as from local community services. Our commitment to promoting improved immunisation rates, again collaborating with GPs, will be a major force for good in

[Mrs. Bottomley]

protecting children. Recently, we announced the remarkable new rates of vaccination and immunisation. We have not yet met all the World Health Organisation targets, but we are determined to do so.

We are committed to an integrated child health service. Under our proposals, the district health authority and family health service authority will work together to ensure that there is an integrated health service for children. The system of contracting will allow a more explicit and better analysed provision of services. There is no doubt that the progress that has occurred in past years will be consolidated and developed as our health reforms move forward.

The hon. Member for Eccles referred to the United Nations convention on the rights of the child. The United Kingdom played a leading role in drafting it. We demonstrated our commitment to the convention by signing it in April and aim to ratify it as soon as possible. The convention specifically draws together the rights of the child in one internationally recognised document. It will serve as an international standard against which countries that turn a blind eye to child exploitation, abuse or neglect can be measured.

Progress has been made but challenges remain. The Government's co-ordinated programme of work on children's issues is ensuring that the physical, mental and social welfare of children and their parents is promoted at all times. I urge my hon. Friends to reject the Opposition's motion.

8.15 pm

Mrs. Llin Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): It is repugnant to think of people posing as social workers to get into homes to molest children to satisfy their perverted desires. The distress caused to those families will live with them for a long time. It is imperative that all these perverted people be caught and punished. It is obvious that they are beyond redemption. Such people must be punished with all the force of the law.

But the law still fails to try alleged child molesters. Even when a person has been charged with sexual abuse, and despite the change in the laws on the giving of evidence by children and allowing video links, I am still getting letters from distraught parents where courts are refusing to hear cases. It cannot be right that parents and children learn to have so little faith in our legal system.

The Government should realise how the law is still failing our children and should make a speedy decision to implement in full the report by Judge Pigot of the advisory group on video evidence. Until and unless this far-sighted report is implemented, I can see little progress or justice for children in our courts. We have to do everything possible to reduce the abuse of our youngsters, but to reduce abuse we need not only to punish but, if possible, to prevent. Of course many child molesters cannot be and have no wish to be reformed, but we know that some feel sick at what they do and desperately seek help. To help our children, we must help them.

There are people such are Ray Wyre of the Gracewell clinic in Birmingham who work hard to try to rehabilitate people who have been convicted of child abuse. But what help is given to assist those who have never been caught and who need help to stop? How many times have the words, "I knew that I was doing wrong, but I didn't seem able to stop," been said by child abusers? Surely it makes sense to establish some kind of help line and counselling for those who wish to stop this dreadful abuse. We recognise the need for help for alcohol abuse, drug abuse, gambling abuse and, through Relate, for marriage breakdown.

The money, the advertising, the concern and the effort put in to tell desperate people where help is available are to be applauded, but where are the advertisements that say, "Ring this number so that we can help you to stop abusing children"? Surely it makes sense to establish some kind of help line to them. The argument against this is that any help line would be dealing with a criminal act, which it would have a duty to report to the police. I understand that, but when it comes to the protection of children and to saving them from abuse, we must look at the law and the legal position of help with different eyes, and we should say that anything that can be done to safeguard children from suffering should be done.

Mrs. Ann Winterton (Congleton): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Golding: I would rather not give way, because we are pressed for time.

It is obvious that, in order to help our children, we must do something to help child molesters to stop abusing. Molesters cause great harm to many children, but many other children are hurt by our neglect—for example, the neglect to provide safe playgrounds. The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents reports that last year 50,000 children were injured in playgrounds and a number were killed. Of those children, 11,500 were under five. Imagine the headlines in the tabloid press if 50,000 children were injured in a football stadium in one day. There would be a national uproar, massive media coverage, a public inquiry and calls for Ministers to resign. However, because those injuries are spread throughout the country and throughout the year, hardly anyone notices.

The progress being made by local authorities towards the provision of safe surfaces and safe equipment in playgrounds is painfully slow because of lack of money and the fear of rate capping. If grants can be given to football stadiums—rightly so—to improve safety, why cannot the Government give special grants to local authorities to improve the safety of playgrounds? The children's pain and suffering is no less because the accidents are spread over many days. We have a duty to those 50,000 children to protect them from harm, broken limbs and even death.

Not only do we have a duty to the unknown number of children who suffer abuse and the children who suffer injuries in playgrounds: we also have a duty to provide shelter for all our children. It is a disgrace that, last year, 120,000 households were accepted as homeless by local authorities and that London appears to be in danger of becoming the Delhi of the western world. We need only visit cardboard city, which is only a short walk from the Houses of Parliament, to hear stories of desperation and of young people being criminalised under the vagrancy legislation because society and hon. Members have failed them.

In the 10 years between 1979 and 1989, 1 million families were registered as homeless in this country. That represents about 3 million people, over half of whom were

children. For them that has meant poor living conditions, overcrowding and often insanitary conditions, with no privacy or space to learn or to develop. For too many of our young people, that has been the background to their family life.

We must provide houses for people at rents that they can afford. The housing associations are doing their best. The private sector is failing badly. The Government must make it possible for councils to build houses for those in need. Children deserve warm, comfortable, safe homes.

It is our duty to protect the welfare of children. We in Parliament cannot dodge that responsibility. We must ensure that children receive the protection of the law, that they are not put at risk in playgrounds and that they are brought up in homes worthy of Britain in the 1990s. We should not and we must not fail them.

8.22 pm

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): It is a sad reflection of the level of interest in the welfare of children among Labour leaders that they have reduced this debate to half a day. We should not scamper through a debate on children. I want to address my remarks on the welfare of children primarily to the health care needs of children and the way those are met in Lancaster, the area that I know best.

Last Thursday, the north Lancashire Child Poverty Action Group produced a report entitled "Poverty in North Lancashire", which was not only highly misleading, but a slur on the hospitals, doctors, nurses and everyone else who provides devoted health care in Lancaster.

The Lancashire CPAG selected Bulk ward, which contains Moor hospital. That is a long-stay mental hospital which has a large number of very elderly, long-stay residents who live there for the closing years of their lives. Not surprisingly, there is quite a high rate of respiratory disorders and deaths from lung cancer in that ward. From that, the report deduces that, if one lives in Bulk ward, one is four times more likely to die of respiratory disease than the average English resident and twice as likely to die of lung cancer. What that has to do with a report which is ostensibly about children I am not quite sure, since we have never had a death from lung cancer in a child and the child death rate in Bulk is similar to that in Silverdale, which can scarcely be described as a deprived area.

The north Lancashire Child Poverty Action Group's report does not give a shred of credit to the local health workers for the many firsts that they had achieved. Ours was the first district to have a child development centre and the first district to attach nursing staff to health care teams and to provide domiciliary physiotherapists, who visit people at home and can help children and others with respiratory problems. The 24-hour domiciliary nursing service was one of the first, if not the first, in the country.

Because of the very high standard of health care in the city, people, including children, come from miles around to benefit from the care that our hospitals provide. When the NHS reforms are implemented next year, and money follows the patient, we will be able to expand our hospital services still further.

In 1988 we had a quite unexpected, sad and inexplicable upturn in perinatal deaths and an inquiry was set up immediately to discover the reason for that, since we had been well below the national average for perinatal deaths every year from 1976. The inquiry found that those sad deaths were of babies with congenital defects so severe as to be incompatible with survival. The figures soon to be published for 1989 will, thankfully, show that that sad phase is now over and that we are back well below the national average once again. I cannot blame the local Child Poverty Action Group for not knowing that welcome news as the results for 1989 have not yet been published. However, the report is to blame for the equally misleading account of unemployment and its relationship to children.

There are no figures for the percentage unemployed in separate wards. Those figures have simply not been compiled. There are figures for the number of unemployed people living in each ward and I have been receiving those figures for years. However, as there are no figures for the total work force, any percentage figures are pure guesswork.

None of that means that we or anyone concerned with health care for adults or children are in any way complacent in Lancaster. We are all constantly striving to improve services in our hospitals and in the community and to provide better jobs. A new children's unit will bring together almost all the specialist provision for children in one unit. In addition, under the new health reforms, there will be a new area director for the new family practitioner committee area of the Lancaster and Blackpool districts, whose brief is to assess health care needs and to develop services to cope with them.

In particular—I am glad that my hon. Friend the Minister referred to this point—43 local GPs will be able to perform minor surgery, thus cutting waiting times, and no fewer than 23 GPs in the city have received approval to provide a child surveillance service. Children will also undoubtedly benefit from the emphasis on health promotion and preventive medicine in the NHS reforms.

There is, however, one area of Government policy with which I do not agree. I believe that child benefit, as a free-standing, non-means tested payment direct to mothers, should be index-linked, like tax allowances and other benefits. That is what I understood by the pledge in our election manifesto that child benefit will be paid "as now, to the mother."

It is possible that I misunderstood the pledge, but I believe that my interpretation is better than the Government's. For many women, child benefit is their only independent source of income and they rely heavily on it. It should be indexed, and I hope that that will be done in the forthcoming expenditure round.

However well we look after the health needs of our children, however much we may improve employment prospects and the material aspects of their lives, the prime ingredient in a child's welfare is, and will remain, a happy, stable home. I am glad that my hon. Friend the Minister placed great emphasis on that.

No marriage, however good, can ever be wholly free of ups and downs—not even that of my hon. Friend the Minister. Indeed, it would be very dull and boring if it were. However, the House bears a heavy responsibility for weakening the marriage bond. The time that must elapse between marriage and divorce has been steadily shortened and the deterrents to living together without undertaking the reciprocal responsibilities of marriage have been steadily diminished. If hon. Members really care about the welfare of children, the House must take a lead in refusing to make divorce ever easier and instead put as much energy

[Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman]

as possible into building up marriage and thus make the best possible contribution to the real and lasting welfare of children.

The declaration of the rights of the child, of which I have a copy, includes in its preamble protection before and after birth. It is a pity that the House forgot that when it cavalierly cast away the Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929 six weeks ago.

8.30 pm

Mr. Ronnie Fearn (Southport): Last year I had the opportunity to speak in the House and in Committee during the passage of the Children Bill. That Bill, which is now an Act, did not go far enough for some of the people who are concerned with the welfare of children, but it was welcomed by all as a step in the right direction. The Act consolidates and simplifies the complex law relating to children. It is intended that the Act be brought into force by October 1991, but already the timetable lags behind.

One of the features of the Act and one of the nagging concerns of many hon. Members was that it left many decisions on policies and procedures to regulations by the Secretary of State. Some of those matters can have serious consequences for the children concerned. Before implementation, there must be time for the various bodies concerned with children's welfare to scrutinise and assess the implications of the regulations and, if necessary, to make representations to the Secretary of State. To date, only one regulation has come forth from the Secretary of State for Health. I understand that his time has been taken up with other matters, but that is the very point that I make. Will quick correct decisions be made?

The measures to be introduced in the Act are coming in at a time of great change. Local authorities, which will be responsible for implementing many of the measures contained in the Act, are facing massive upheavals. Now and in the next few years, local government will be expected to come with changes in our schools through local management, the national curriculum, competitive tendering, the privatisation of services, the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, community care, changes to our National Health Service and, as everyone is only too aware, a restructuring of the financial system, with the consequential nightmare of the administration of the poll tax. Each of those items affects the welfare of our children.

I firmly believe that the Children Act 1989 does not go far enough. As I said on Second Reading on 27 April 1989, the Act does not address such important factors as inadequate housing, low incomes, general deprivation and other issues that were aggravated by the Government's lack of concern and by their policies for local government, child allowance and social security payments. Things have got dramatically worse.

Homelessness has increased by 20 per cent. Over the past three years, the number of homeless households placed in temporary accommodation has increased by 25 per cent. The number of young people between the ages of 16 and 19 who, under the Children Act are still regarded as children and who are homeless and, on the streets of London, is estimated as at least 50,000. Those people do not appear in the official statistics. When we add that figure to the 362,309 homeless persons, as estimated by Shelter, it adds up to many hundreds of children living in conditions that are detrimental if not outright harmful to their health, well-being and quality of life.

In 1987, there were more than 450 known cases of children being taken into care simply because of homelessness. I wonder what the figure is today—perhaps the Minister can enlighten us.

Children of homeless families are known to suffer physically, emotionally and educationally. They have a poor chance in life. There are short-term, medium-term and long-term remedies for relieving the number of homeless. Most of them are well documented, including those contained in my party's White Paper entitled "Housing: A Time for Action" and in the document entitled "Seen But Not Heard", which was launched today by my right hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown). The Government have the power to do something, and they must not neglect their duty. Surely in this day and age children have a right to a roof over their heads.

Poverty is one of the main causes of homelessness, but, even for those who are lucky enough to have a home, poverty is a major factor in poor health. The number of known families with children living below the poverty line has increased enormously over the past few years. It is a common perception that, since the Goverment took office, the rich have got richer and the poor have got poorer. The effects of the high interest rates and the rising inflation of the past two years alone must give some truth to that statement. However, the one benefit that is directed specifically at children has been frozen for years. The restoration of its value would go a long way towards improving the life styles of children from low-income families.

Current trends in society and in the market demand that more and more mothers go out to work, yet we still have one of the worst European Community records in the provision of nursery and child care. Once again, the Goverment's policy on tax relief for workplace nurseries, although welcome as an anti-discriminatory measure, will prove beneficial only to those who by definition already have an adequate income because they pay more tax. Nursery care, out-of-school care and other child care services should be a major priority for all children, but such care is even more important for the disadvantaged. There is a general duty on local authorities to provide services for children in need, but the wording of the duty is not as strong as many would have hoped, and the delivery of such services may depend on adequate funding and resources.

That is unfortunately true of many of the Government's measures and changes. I say "unfortunately" because, although some of the ideas are right, I do not believe that they are introduced for the best reasons. Most changes are taking place because of political ideology rather than interest in the welfare of the child or other client. Part of that ideology is to save the public purse.

The measures contained in the Children Act and in the proposed changes to community care will call not only for a change in attitude in social services but for training in various skills. The proposed changes could work well as long as local government is given the funds and resources required to implement them. Some of the proposals currently being implemented in education may also have some benefits, but, until the Government realise that they

need to provide for the anomalies that have appeared in the funding mechanism, chaos will still reign and our children will lose.

I do not think that adequate funding for the proposals in the new health Bill will help to improve our Health Service. The proposals can only damage a health service that was designed to provide comprehensive health care free at the point of delivery. They will also have a detrimental effect on the health of our children. Once again, those in need will suffer most. I fear for the future. The debacle that we have seen with the introduction of the poll tax and future pressure on local government finance may bring about the end of many personal social services that are vital to the well-being of the community as a whole.

When funds are scarce, local authorities will need to set priorities. It is difficult to judge priorities in the provision of such vital services, and it is likely that the services that are not already in place will be the first to get the axe. That does not augur well for services that contribute to the welfare of children.

I have tried to cover many topics, but, because the welfare of children depends on so many of our institutions, we should go further. The Department of Health, the Department of Education and Science, the Department of the Environment, and the Department of Social Security have a major part to play. At local level, education, health, social service and social security offices interplay. Co-operation and co-ordination are essential. Some local authorities are already achieving a level of co-operating and co-ordinating their work—others are dragging their feet for one reason or another.

All those bodies need Government support, possibly institutional, to encourage them and to guide them. At the very least, we need a national strategy for the welfare of children—a clear statement of aims, objectives and rights that can form the framework within which all the departments and bodies concerned with children can work. That would make their job a great deal easier.

On Second Reading of the Children Act, I called upon the Government to take the opportunity of attaching a children's charter to it. I failed in my attempt, but I was pleased to have the opportunity to table an early-day motion to welcome the United Nations convention on the rights of the child. I urge the Government to take the necessary measures to ratify the convention and to use it as a base upon which to build a national strategy for the welfare of our children.

8.40 pm

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): I was impressed and pleased when I saw that the Opposition had chosen the welfare of children as the subject for today's debate. However, my feelings soon changed when I found—as my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) has commented—that at short notice the debate had been reduced to half a day to allow a debate on eye tests. That is an issue on which I share the Opposition's view, but the timing is singularly inappropriate and it is unfortunate that that debate led to the curtailing of this debate.

Then I saw the opening words of the Opposition's motion, which are pure party political claptrap. I then read the rest of the lengthy motion in which there is no mention of the Children Act 1989, which is surely the most important piece of legislation in this area to have passed through the House in this Parliament—or, indeed, for a century. It is the most important piece of legislation since the original Prevention of Cruelty to, and Protection of, Children Act 1889.

The passing of the 1989 Act was marked by all-party support throughout. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) and his hon. Friends who served on the Standing Committee deserve some of the credit for the success of that Act, but that legislation has been completely ignored in the Opposition's motion. It is deplorable that the Opposition should now choose children as the basis on which to launch a party political attack. That does not reflect any credit on them.

The Children Act struck the right balance between the rights of children, the rights of parents and the responsibility of the state in the form of the local authorities. Alas, we all know the long string of cases, followed by inquiries, when the social worker has intervened too late. Cleveland is still fresh in our minds; to put it no higher, in some cases the social workers were too precipitate. It was important that we should get that balance right, and I hope and pray that we did so in the Children Act. Among the Act's many notable features is the recognition of the principle that the child's welfare is paramount. The Act introduced the emergency protection order, and especially the child assessment order, which is such an important step in allowing access to a child where there is concern, but not necessarily an emergency.

We have passed the Act and it is now up to the local authorities to implement it, together, of course, with the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, which is named in the Act and which, as the House knows, has 66 child protection teams on 24-hour call in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The House will be aware of my interest in and involvement with the NSPCC. Needless to say, my reference to the society in no way diminishes my admiration for the work of the other organisations to which the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) referred.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: I know of my hon. Friend's support for the work of the NSPCC, but is he aware of its work in funding Westminster house in Warrington, which is the first team effort of its kind for child protection? That centre is right next to the courts and social services which, together with the NSPCC, combine in trying to provide good services for children from Cheshire and further afield. I understand that it is the first such centre in this country.

Mr. Sims: I am not familiar with the project that my hon. Friend has mentioned, but it is typical of the way in which local authorities and organisations such as the NSPCC can work together for the benefit of children.

I was pleased that my hon. Friend the Minister detailed the extra funds that will be provided. We cannot emphasise too strongly how vital it is that adequate resources are available to provide both the facilities needed to implement the Children Act and the training for those with the job of implementing it.

We all understand the demands that are placed on the Government from all quarters and what happens during the public expenditure survey, but, as the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Fearn) said, we must all recognise that

[Mr. Sims]

local authorities have particular difficulties at the moment in introducing the community care provisions of existing legislation—the Children Act, and other measures. If adequate resources are not provided for the implementation of the Children Act, all our efforts in the House will have been in vain. It would not be the first time that we have been accused of passing legislation for the ends but not providing the means.

The motion refers to co-ordination between organisations in gathering information. A lot is going on in that area; much of it, such as the register, follows initiatives from the NSPCC. There is a need for research into understanding child abuse and the most effective forms of intervention. We must consider how best the various agencies—medical, social work and police—can work together in this area.

We should not underestimate the size of the problem or the number of children who need protection. To quote but one statistic, in the year to the end of September 1989, 49,000 children were referred to the NSPCC alone. The NSPCC estimates that nationally probably 8,000 children suffer physical abuse, 6,000 are sexually abused and thousands suffer from neglect or emotional abuse or are simply left alone for many hours.

Our approach should be based on the four principles of the United Nations convention—the four Ps of prevention, protection, provision and participation. Prevention involves the development of, for example, drop-in facilities and self-help groups for young parents. Even earlier, we should include preparation for parenthood—how important that is—in the school curriculum. Prevention also includes making the public more aware of the problem by organised publicity such as the NSPCC's "Listen to Children" campaign.

Protection involves the proper training of social workers to ensure that children at risk are protected. As the hon. Member for Eccles said, it is not acceptable to have children on the at-risk register if a social worker is not assigned to them.

Provision means the provision of help to families and single parents who are poor, inadequate or homeless. Those are often the circumstances in which abused children are found. Such children are in danger of growing up and perhaps eventually becoming abusing parents themselves—and continuing the cycle.

Participation means giving the children themselves access to help through things such as Childline—the NSPCC's child protection line.

I join the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) in urging the Government to implement the Pigot report so that children can be involved in court proceedings through video—recorded evidence and do not have to suffer the trauma of appearing personally. We must ensure that children are properly represented in court proceedings by independent guardians ad litem.

Children should be involved as far as possible in decisions affecting their future. Against the four principles of prevention, protection, provision and participation, the Government have a record of promotion of the welfare of children of which they can be proud. They should be proud but not complacent. Ministers know better than I do that there remains a great deal to be done. Certainly, the ratification of the UN convention would, as the Opposition motion suggests, be an earnest of the Government's commitment to the cause of the welfare of children. I realise that my hon. Friend the Minister could not give a specific date, but I urge her to use all her influence to ensure that ratification takes place as soon as possible.

8.50 pm

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): I pay tribute to the Opposition Front Bench for giving us tonight the opportunity to raise issues of great concern to many of our constituents. I found it amusing that my Front-Bench colleagues were attacked for allowing only three hours for this debate. At least we have three hours. The Opposition have taken that initiative. It is a great pity that the Government have not taken such an initiative.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) referred to worries about bogus social workers. That is a particular problem and worry for many people in the Yorkshire area, where the largest number of incidents has been reported. The figure mentioned at the police conference earlier this week was about 170, of which they are taking seriously approximately 30. I wish to express my anxiety that, although there have been many incidents and many descriptions have been given of the individuals involved, no arrests have been made and no one has been brought to book. I do not criticise the police: I simply ask whether police forces are allocating sufficient resources to the police officers conducting the investigations. Perhaps the Minister could raise the matter with her Home Office colleagues.

I had hoped that the Minister for Health would remain in the Chamber, because the Department of Health has a responsibility in the issue of bogus social workers. It is in a position to make clear to the public precisely what social workers can and cannot do. The Minister will be aware, as I am, that the powers of social workers on the doorstep are limited. In view of the extent of the problem, the Department should have issued a clear statement through the Government's publicity machine informing the public what powers social workers have. I hope that the Minister will communicate to her hon. Friend the Minister for Health my anxieties about the matter. The Department could be helpful in following the example of the British Association of Social Workers and several local authorities by issuing a statement such as I suggested explaining to the public what social workers can and cannot do.

I had the positive experience not too long ago, along with the hon. Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) and some of my hon. Friends, of serving on the Standing Committee on the Children Bill. There was a consensus within the Committee, and the two sides worked together in a positive way, as the hon. Member for Chislehurst said. I am worried by the complete failure of the Government properly to fund the implementation of that legislation. That anxiety has been expressed to me by local authorities, councillors and directors of social services and, indeed, by voluntary organisations involved in child care. It is estimated that, in the next financial year, local authorities will need £140 million of additional resources to implement the legislation properly. If the Government are serious about the Children Act 1989, they must provide the money required at grass roots level to implement the good work that could arise from it.

The Minister could also communicate to the Minister for Health that local authorities are worried by the lack of guidance from the Department of Health on the implementation of the Children Act 1989. I understand that local authorities were promised about 30 sets of notes of guidance some considerable time ago. The documents were due to be released by the Department of Health but they have yet to appear. In view of the time scale for implementation, it is about time that the Department of Health got its act together to get the information through to local authorities.

As I said, I and some Conservative Members felt that there was a political consensus in the Committee on the Children Bill. However, it has become apparent in the debate tonight that there is no political consensus about the reasons behind the problems faced by children who come to the attention of local authority child care and social services departments and the problems that vast numbers of children at risk face day by day.

We have heard comments from Conservative Members about parental responsibility. As a parent, I take that responsibility seriously. I am sure that any parent takes it seriously. It is the responsibility to give the child food and shelter. But it is easier for some parents to exercise that responsibility than for others. That is the difference between the two sides of the Chamber tonight. Opposition Members recognise that fact. What annoys me deeply about the Government's tactics in the welfare of children is the way in which they deliberately encourage the belief that child neglect and abuse should be viewed simply as abnormal family behaviour—as an individual, not a societal matter. I feel strongly about that.

For much of the time before I became a Member of Parliament, I was involved directly in dealing with cases of child neglect and abuse in my work in social services. It is worrying that the Government see child abuse and neglect as a technical problem which needs technical solutions. They do not see it in the wider context that my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) outlined. My hon. Friend was accused of playing politics. We are not playing politics: we are examining the real issues behind many of the problems which face children who are abused, neglected and hurt in our society.

It is vital that child welfare is seen in a wider political context and that we examine and address the causes, not just the symptoms presented day by day to social services departments. The causes include poverty. Let us be honest about it. Both Conservative and Opposition Members recognise that there is poverty in our society. Whatever one's politics, we can see it in our surgeries every week. People simply do not have enough to live on and are driven to desperation in many instances.

From the work that I have done, in social services, as a councillor and as a Member of Parliament, I recognise the connection between poverty and the number of children who end up in care. The figures on children in care show that most of them come from poor families. That is no coincidence.

During the recess last week, I read a book called "The Politics of Child Welfare" written by two former colleagues of mine in West Yorkshire, Nick Frost and Mike Steen. One quote from that book rang home with me, because it made sense:

"The families of the poor have little left to lose. Why should they lose their children?"

Let us take the issue seriously. It is wrong that we take the children of poor people into care. We should look for alternatives. At present we often do not do so.

I do not need to quote the Social Services Select Committee report, which makes it clear that the position of the poor had worsened under this Government. That has directly affected vast numbers of children and we should be ashamed of it. I do not need to mention unemployment, but there is a clear correlation between family breakdown and unemployment. It has been widely researched and there is objective political consensus that it has a bearing on family and marriage breakdown. In my area there has been an 800 per cent. increase in homelessness. Children are entering care simply because their parents do not have a decent house for them to live in. That is a scandal in this day and age, yet it is happening today, this week, this year. It is wrong.

I am only the second or third man to speak in this debate. It is interesting that we have a predominance of women in the Chamber for this debate, and I welcome it. I only wish that more women were Members of Parliament. They have a particular contribution to make on this issue.

Sexual inequality has a direct relationship with sexual abuse. We should look at the matter and not play politics with child sexual abuse, as some hon. Members do. We should seriously consider why these problems arise. Sexual abuse is predominantly about male power and the way in which society allows a distorted construction of masculinity. It is particularly distorted by the squalid commercial use of sex. It is interesting that the newspapers that peddle pornography are those that strongly support the Conservative Government. There is a clear correlation between the two. We need to address the fact that certain men turn out as they do. It is difficult for us males to do that. I hope that we shall have more time in the Chamber to address those difficult issues.

I am worried about how we address the problems of children at risk in terms of supervision, not prevention. If something goes wrong, we blame the social worker, the health visitor, the lack of inter-agency co-operation, bad parenting or bad professional practice, but not bad policies or bad Governments. It is about time that we started looking at how bad policies and bad Governments, of whatever political complexion, have a bearing on what happens to children.

There is a desperate need to change the agenda on child welfare to tackle the causal factors of the problems—for example, how we treat the poor, how we treat black people and how men treat women. We need to look at those issues. Above all, we need a strategy that looks not just at the clinical treatment of individual children and individual families, but at overall economic and housing policies and policies on sexual equality. Issue after issue has a bearing on the lives of children. That strategy will be number one on the list of priorities of the forthcoming Labour Government, and I look forward to their election.

9.2 pm

Mrs. Maureen Hicks (Wolverhampton, North-East): Tonight the Opposition have chosen to put child welfare at the top of their agenda for one evening, although, unfortunately, there are not many here to witness it. Contrary to what their motion says, over the past 11 years children have always been at the top of our agenda.

[Mrs. Maureen Hicks]

I welcome the debate because it helps to provide an umbrella welfare policy over all the measures from the many Departments, including the Departments of Health, of Social Security and of Employment. All are involved in the needs of children. Unfortunately, the Opposition have opposed many of the measures that we have introduced in the past 11 years. I hoped that tonight the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) might suggest some constructive policies, but in their absence from her rather gloomy speech I remind her of Labour Members' vociferous opposition to our education reforms.

Education is the basis of any child's development. If the ground rules are not firmly established at an early stage in a child's education, all talk of the child's welfare may as well go out of the window. Parents, teachers and peer groups are children's greatest role models. If their important influence and example are felt in early years, many later problems, particularly in teenage years, could be slashed. Although I am a career woman, I am the first to admit that there is no one quite like mum. If mums can possibly stay at home for the first five years of a child's life —I know that in many cases mothers must work—that child will have a stable start in life.

I am encouraged by the progress that we have made in bringing parents and education closer together. That has been neglected in the past. Not so long ago, many schools did not welcome parents into the classrooms, and parents were not encouraged to form parent-teacher associations; now, at long last, they are not being kept at arm's length. Our reforms involve parents in knowing what their children should be learning, and when they should learn, in assessing their children's ability potential and in knowing their children's weaknesses and strengths throughout the crucial school years. Parents are now encouraged to become school governors, to choose where their children go to school and—in many ways—to say who should run their school.

I was disappointed that the hon. Member for Eccles did not mention the role of parents. Nothing gave me more pleasure than visiting a school in my constituency and seeing many mums informally reading with their children: it was not just a few children and parents, but a hallful. One more ingredient must be added to the education reforms. I know that I could be labelled old-fashioned, but to formulate successfully the foundation for our children's education we must give them sound discipline. I am not alone among parents in saying that if we restored corporal punishment it would be a great help to teachers. Any debate on the welfare of children cannot get away from the subject of discipline.

Of course more mothers are going out to work. I fear that, as a result, in some areas where it is difficult to provide child care and parents have not adequate resources there could be an increase in the number of latch-key children hanging round waiting for their parents to come home from work. I am encouraged that the Government have taken the initiative to write to chief education officers and school governors to ask for school premises to be made available after school, and—more important—during school holidays. It is ridiculous that school sports facilities, for instance, are closed for a third of the year. In inner cities such as mine, many children live in high-rise areas, and have not had experience of green areas. I am sure that we could encourage more education authorities to make school facilities available.

Ms. Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Hicks: I cannot give way; time is pressing.

People sometimes forget that children are their parents' responsibility, and not society's. Some parents abdicate that responsibility which imposes a burden on the rest of society. It is encouraging that, to assist the Government and parents, many action groups are now coming forward. It is sad to hear that children—some barely out of their prams—are tempted to smoke, drink and, certainly in my area, to sniff glue and take drugs. I congratulate groups such as the "parents' action against tobacco" campaign, which aims to discourage shopkeepers from selling cigarettes to children; the Portman group, which aims to deter underage drinking; and the *Birmingham Post* campaign to try to stop shopkeepers providing children as young as 14 with video nasties which should be given only to people over 18. All those initiatives should be endorsed.

The hon. Member for Eccles mentioned the power of television advertising. I would go a step further. We talk of the influence of parents, schools, and children's peer groups, but the influence of television is especially worrying. From the age of four onwards, children are watching an average of three to four hours' television a night. I am sure that none of us would support that, as it is a great tragedy and a bad influence on our children. Children now have greater expectations and more pocket money. Those are all social trends that contribute to the welfare debate.

I know that the Opposition throw stones at us about the number of homeless children today. Many do not choose to make themselves homeless, but I am disappointed to hear Opposition Members suggest that we should encourage young people to take the option to leave home to go to London should they wish, and allow them to sleep rough.

Miss Lestor: Who said that?

Mrs. Hicks: My hon. Friend the Minister also informed us that many young people are driven out of their homes. Families should do all that they can to keep together.

In common with the Minister, I encourage every young person into training. As the option for training on YTS or whatever is available to every child, I am amazed that Opposition Members should suggest that if a child does not want such training it need not take it. Surely our aim must be to encourage children to train so that, ultimately, they can get jobs.

I know that many of my constituents welcome the forthcoming Criminal Justice Bill as they hope that it will contain further measures to make parents responsible for their children's criminal actions. I have no doubt that if parents have to go before a court and pay some of the fines imposed on their children that will make them more responsible for their children's actions.

I recognise that domestic violence and divorce are increasing. Those are serious issues and, as things are getting worse, I have no doubt that the Government will need to consider them more closely. It is inevitable that domestic violence and divorce cause emotional problems for children and financial resource problems for the

Government. It is right that we are taking steps to make fathers who leave their wives and children more responsible. At the moment only a quarter of fathers make the desired payments and it is right that the Government should act.

I also applaud the work of the agency Relate. If we can prevent children from being harmed in any way and families from being broken up, we must support agencies such as Relate whose voluntary workers do their best to keep families together.

I found the Opposition's motion somewhat waffley and I have not heard many constructive policies from Labour Members. I know that the Labour party has put forward many proposals in its policy document and perhaps tonight was an opportunity to give some of them an airing. However, the hon. Member for Eccles did not mention nursery education, perhaps because she is aware of the 50 per cent. increase in nursery school provision by the Government. Perhaps she is also aware of the cuts imposed by the previous Labour Government. I believe that I am right in saying that the hon. Lady was Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education when considerable cuts were made in educational provision and that she was forced to resign.

Miss Lestor: I was not forced.

Mrs. Hicks: I admire the hon. Lady for following her principles.

When the Labour party criticises our measures on child welfare it should remember that it made hasty promises in the past about nursery education for every child. We have sustained our promises and the Labour party would be ill-advised to make new promises that it cannot keep.

Tonight has been a valuable opportunity to discuss the many issues involved in the welfare of children. This has been an important debate and I thank the Opposition for choosing to discuss the subject. The Conservative party is committed to children and they are safe with us. Our policies prove that we are responsible towards them and many of the Acts that we have produced recently demonstrate that.

9.13 pm

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Last November I asked a series of questions and, over a number of weeks, pursued lines of inquiry about the sexual abuse of children. If we have been asked for plain speaking tonight I should remind the House that, in 1988, 13 people were charged with the murder of an infant under one year of age, 229 people were charged with cruelty or neglect of children, 56 people were charged with child abduction, there were 2,159 cases of indecent assault on a female aged under 16 and 320 cases of buggery with a boy under 16 or with a woman or an animal.

Tonight in the main line stations of this city many young people will come here lost and in need of advice. Many of them will have run away from those role models about which we have just heard—those very parents who should provide care and consideration for them. Many will be at risk from adults whose depraved tastes are such that they not only continually seek the company of children whom they seek to corrupt and attack but also continually seek access to child pornography.

In 1992 the gates of our country will be opened to even more child pornography under the name of freedom of trade. What do the Government intend to do about that? What do they intend to do about the work of the interdepartmental committee about which the Minister has spoken and which is carrying on day by day? What results can they offer us in the encouragement of police forces to set up specialised units to deal with child pornography, and with attacks on children and in providing proper resources and proper back-up forces? There is no point in blaming a police force which is undermanned and under attack because of the amount of money that it requires from local authorities if the Government are not prepared to treat this matter seriously.

I asked for a programme of the work of the interdepartmental committee because I wanted to see what had happened since November about the work that is so essential. I looked at many of the studies that are being undertaken and I was horrified by the tiny amounts of money that are being allocated. Professional intervention in child abuse rates £23,000. Intervention in child sexual abuse rates £225,000. In the list of subjects to be considered I found under the heading of

"Feasibility of a prevalence study"

the news that

"This will examine the feasibility of a study to provide reliable estimates of the scale of sexual abuse of children in England and Wales."

Parliament does not know how many children are being abused day after day and night after night. We come here and trot out cliches about role models and caring Governments, but Parliament has no access to the information that would enable it to decide where to send money or where to provide facilities. We do not have enough social workers or trained teachers and we are even losing many people from our police forces whom we will need to deal with the abuse of children that is becoming a real danger every day of the week.

When we go away this subject will disappear, but abused children will not. The House requires better of the Government than a simple listing of amounts of money. Every voluntary organisation in the land is committed and we know that people of good will exist. How can the Government answer not just to hon. Members but to the people who elected them by saying, "We mean well and we are committed to a general good idea of parental authority. Unfortunately, we have no intention of spending money, time or effort to do anything to protect those who are most at risk"?

9.17 pm

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): The Opposition are to be congratulated on giving us at least a half-day debate, because it gave the Minister a chance to put forward a robust explanation of the Government's policy towards children and the family. That is now on the record and it will give great heart to Conservatives throughout Britain whoare concerned about these issues and worried about the efforts of the Government. I congratulate the Minister on showing how co-ordinated those efforts are, not only in their scope but in the way that they are beginning to interelate.

Many of us who were worried about family matters and their relationship to children were perhaps under the impression that policy had not been carefully thought through, but, clearly, we are out of date and the Minister is ahead of the game. In that context I look forward to the

[Mr. Ian Taylor]

winding-up speech of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Social Security who I know has been putting in a great deal of effort on these matters in the Department.

There is no difference between the Government and the Opposition in terms of our genuine concern for children. There is also no difference in our understanding that the Government have a clear role in dealing with problems. We have heard about the many measures that the Government have brought forward. The difference seems to lie in understanding what the voluntary sector can do. Some Opposition Members have shown not so much a disdain for voluntary organisations but a concern that the work that they do is not being undertaken by the Government. I think that it is a positive virtue that it is being done by voluntary organisations, which have skills that are specifically related to the task that they are undertaking. These organisations are the closest to the problems. I welcome their work——

Ms. Gordon: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Taylor: No. I have little time to make my speech. If more time were available to me, I would willingly give way.

The reality is that voluntary organisations are doing excellent work. I am sure that all of us have connections with them and that we would all like to cite what they are doing. Recently, I came across the National Playing Fields Association and its mean streets campaign. It is an excellent way of highlighting some of the problems that arise in urban areas and an example of the effective way in which a voluntary organisation can work with local and national government.

There is no doubt that the Government have spent record sums on many of the areas of concern to which attention has been drawn tonight. The Government have produced the Children Act 1989, which provides an important legal framework. However, the welfare of children is not confined to state or Government intervention. Our concern must focus also on parental responsibility and family values. My hon. Friend the Minister for Health has talked eloquently about parental responsibility, and that is a central consideration. The Government have a role in protecting and developing the child and his environment, but they cannot be a substitute for the family. Therefore, we should judge the Government's role and the scope of their policy by how well they create conditions that encourage family life and remove obstacles to the betterment of that life.

It is with great sadness that all of us have noted figures that show that the background against which teenagers are growing up is of considerable concern. Some of the statistics are worth recounting even if they are known to hon. Members. We know that one in three marriages ends in divorce and that the divorce rate in Britain is one of the highest in Europe. Births outside marriage account for 25 per cent. of all births. The number of lone-parent families in receipt of income support is about 725,000. That is the latest figure in my possession. These are worrying statistics. The Government are not to blame for them, but the important consideration is how they react to them. Also important is the change in moral values within society.

Homelessness has rightly been mentioned, because it affects children. It is interesting that 43 per cent. of those who are classified as homeless cite as the cause of their plight the break-up of family life and the lack of ability or willingness of the family to accommodate them. Another 17 per cent. cite the breakdown of a relationship with a partner as the cause of homelessness. This background is important to the way in which our children develop and the way in which they begin to learn to face the world.

The Government are tackling the issues, and various figures have been mentioned. It is important to note that £10 billion will be spent in 1990-91 on a range of benefits for the family. That is an increase of 25 per cent. in real terms since 1979. That is to be compared with a net decline under the last Labour Government—this is in real terms of course—of over 8 per cent. That justifies the Government's confidence that we are doing our best. Further efforts are being directed to the homeless to try to hold families together. My hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning has announced a specific scheme that will target directly several millions of pounds to agencies such as the citizens advice bureaux and SHAC. That is important because they can give on-the-spot counselling to enable families to stay together and perhaps reduce the likelihood of children leaving their homes and becoming homeless.

I am sure that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Social Security will draw attention to the fact that we are targeting income support directly at those who are the poorest. I understand what my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) says about child benefit. She made a powerful contribution which was based on great experience. The problem with child benefit is that, even if it were increased, it would not benefit those receiving income support.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: It gives the mother a little independence.

Mr. Taylor: My hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster is certainly a person of great independence. I do not challenge that, but I believe that the Government are right to target income support rather than increase the more general provision of child benefit.

The Government are beginning to do the right thing in other areas of child welfare and parental responsibility. Although at least one Opposition Member objected to the Government's efforts to make parents more responsible for the behaviour of juveniles, I believe that they are generally welcomed. I go further, and suggest that parents should also serve a period of community service, rather than just make juveniles perform that obligation.

I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury recently announced that the Inland Revenue will provide the private addresses of parents to enable the Department of Social Security to chase up those who should be making maintenance payments—such as the husbands of women who are still bringing up their children.

Sadly, our debate on this important subject has been too short. Parental responsibility is a vital factor. Unless the Government encourage parents to take more responsibility for their children, no amount of legislative measures will by themselves be effective. The present Government have a fine record. We must build on it to

ensure that parents play their part in a partnership that will make certain that our children will grow up in a better and safer world.

9.26 pm

Mrs. Rosie Barnes (Greenwich): In the few minutes available to me, I shall draw the attention of the House to a particular group of children about whom I have grown increasingly concerned in recent months. I refer to children in care. Contrary to popular belief, the concept of taking children into care and thereby affording them a degree of protection that has hitherto been missing from their lives is all too often no more than a myth. I do not mean to disparage the efforts of the many dedicated social and care workers, and the people who run our children's homes to the very best of their abilities, in attempting to provide a reasonable life for youngsters who have invariably had a difficult start. However, I am increasingly drawn to the conclusion that many children's homes are unloving, brutal places—and I do not use those words lightly.

Repeated complaints by children in care have been ignored over the decades, for a variety of reasons. When children are placed in care, they are sometimes put at greater risk than had they remained at home. One hon. Member remarked that all too often a social worker intervenes too late. I should like to be certain that, when a social worker intervenes, and when a child is taken into care, the provision made for that child is better than that which it left behind.

Dr. Michael Lindsay is a children's rights officer in Leicester who works also for an organisation called Voice for the Child in Care. Earlier this year, he wrote to draw my attention to some of the work that he has done in investigating 30 cases in which inquiries were made into the conduct of the staff of certain children's homes over a 10-year period. Those were just the cases that came to light following intense pressure—usually from the media. Dr. Lindsay has, like me, reached the conclusion that one is dealing not with a number of isolated incidents involving particular offences but a trend that is endemic in children's homes.

Children's homes are, for a variety of reasons, forced to employ people who have not been properly vetted, and who do not have the skills necessary for dealing with the sometimes very difficult children who are brought to them for care and attention. The children who are easiest to look after are usually fostered or adopted. It is the most difficult children who remain in institutions.

In Greenwich, two investigations into local children's homes have produced frightening results. In one case, the local ombudsman was the final resort for the children in question, after previous inquiries had whitewashed complaints. The ombudsman's report said that there was an

"almost total lack of professionalism"

among senior staff. Talking about the experience of one girl, the report said:

"Whatever innocence or childhood she had left was lost . . . This may well have affected her future life and her ability to form relationships".

Physical, sexual and emotional abuse were highlighted, as well as bad language by staff, under-age drinking and sexual relationships between staff and children.

I know that the pressures on time mean that I cannot develop the argument that I would wish to make for a better review of the situation of children in care, including independent access for them to make complaints. I ask the Minister to consider initiating a serious study into the experiences of children currently in care and those who have been left in care.

Before I came to the House, I was involved in a number of such projects on other subjects commissioned by the Central Office of Information. A thorough and professional study would shock the nation into the action which is so long overdue.

9.31 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mrs. Gillian Shephard): This has been a wide-ranging debate of great interest and importance to the House. I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) for giving the House the opportunity to debate these issues. Her interest in the welfare of children is well known and has been demonstrated over the years.

I shall respond to as much as possible of what has been said, although time will not allow me to speak on all the main issues raised.

With reference to health and those matters specifically connected with the Children Act 1989, my hon. Friend the Minister for Health, who opened the debate so skilfully, has been present throughout most of it and will have taken note of the subjects raised. We will both ensure that matters which concern other ministerial colleagues are referred to them.

I shall briefly mention some of the excellent contributions from hon. Members on both sides of the House. My hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) gave her usual spirited defence of Lancaster health authority. I am sorry that she is not in her place—[HON. MEMBERS: "She is."]—yes, she nearly is. It is always a pleasure to acknowledge her enthusiasm for Lancaster health authority.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) again demonstrated his deep knowledge of the subject, and the experience that he has drawn from his association with the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

I was impressed by some of the points made by the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe), particularly on bogus social workers and what the public expect of social workers. I, too, have had long experience and association with social services departments and have been struck by the ambivalence of the public's attitude to what is required of social workers. It causes great difficulty and is something with which the Government, the British Association of Social Workers and the Association of Directors of Social Services grapple, and it seems difficult to find a solution.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Hicks) gave her usual impassioned defence of parental and individual responsibility for which I thank her.

My hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) has taken a particular interest in the work of voluntary organisations on homelessness, particularly among young people, and I thank him for his contribution.

In introducing the Government's response to the debate I can do no better than refer the House to the 42 principles of good child care practice which underline the Children Act. I, too, find it strange that the Opposition omitted to refer in their motion to the Act and the 42 principles. The

[Mrs. Gillian Shephard]

Children Act represents the most comprehensive contribution to the welfare of children that has ever been enacted by Parliament, and the 42 principles form an excellent base for a children's charter.

Children and their families are important to us all. During the past decade the Government have sought to strike a balance between family autonomy and parental responsibility and the protection of children by the state, where that is necessary. We have emphasised the practical, in the belief—repeated only a few weeks ago by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office in a debate on the family—that the family is the basic building block of society. The aim of Government policy, co-ordinated throughout Government Departments, has been to emphasise the central role of the family in society.

The Government do not believe that part of their role is to develop grand social engineering schemes. However, they can and do promote the interests of the family by encouraging independence and choice while at the same time providing help for families who are unable to cope with the wide range of contemporary pressures that face many of them today. The vast majority of parents are able and willing to take their responsibilities seriously. It is curious that little mention has been made by the Opposition of parents' enthusiasm for their role. For those parents, who are in the majority, the Government, by developing a prosperous economy, have provided choice and independence. However, they must provide help for families in difficulty, for whatever reason.

Reference has been made to child benefit and the income levels of families with children. While responding to those points, may I make a few general remarks about the Government's social security policies. The House is already aware that in the coming year the Government plan to spend a record £55 billion on social security. That represents the third increase in real terms since we came to office. It amounts to £20 a week for every man, woman and child in the country.

It is worth bearing in mind the fact that because of the Government's economic policies—increased earnings, lower taxation and higher personal allowances—there has been a growth of £20 a week during the past year in the take-home pay of a married man on average earnings. Other tax changes, such as independent taxation for women, will also result in increased incomes for better-off families. For less well-off families, we have been able to direct specific help towards families with children—including lone parents—and the disabled through income support and family credit.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: It is not only better-off families who will benefit from independent taxation. Pensioner wives on moderate incomes will now be able to count their part of the pension against their tax allowance.

Mrs. Shephard: My hon. Friend is right.

For the less well-off, we have been able to direct specific help towards families with children, through income support and family credit. Family credit in particular provides a significant tax-free cash income, payable to over 300,000 low-income working families with children. The same families obviously do not benefit over a period, which means that far more than 300,000 families receive help. The average payment is over £27 a week. In nearly every case family credit is paid to the mother.

To target resources on those in need involves making judgments about the needs of different groups at different times. It was no doubt with the need for flexibility in mind that when the Opposition introduced child benefit 15 years ago their legislation required child benefit to be reviewed but not to be indexed annually. When my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security was considering last year's uprating of child benefit he had to consider all the circumstances, including the increase in average take-home pay and the fact that an automatic increase in child benefit would not help the least well-off families on income support and family credit because those benefits are adjusted to take account of changes in the child benefit.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): How can the hon. Lady claim justification for saying that increasing child benefit does not help those on the lowest incomes on the ground that income support is automatically adjusted to take account of any increase? The Government are responsible for the regulations stating how much money people can keep. It is the Minister's responsibility and nobody else's if child benefit does not help those at the lower end of the scale.

Mrs. Shephard: The hon. Gentleman's intervention makes absolutely no difference to the point that I was making. Increasing child benefit across the board would benefit a great number of families who do not need that help, but targeting resources, as we have done, has increased help to less well-off families.

Ms. Armstrong: Has the hon. Lady read the report of the Social Services Select Committee about the impact of Government policy on the poorest families? Has she taken into account the problems that Government policies have caused to those on marginal tax rates who are doing much worse? Child benefit is the one benefit that would have targeted services to children and given them the livelihood that we know they need and deserve.

Mrs. Shephard: Obviously, I have read the Select Committee report. The fact that I am making a point about targeting clearly implies the Government's recognition that some families have not done so well as others. As the hon. Lady will know, there has been a distinct improvement in the interaction of tax and social security benefits.

Concern has been expressed about lone parents who have a particularly difficult time bringing up their children. Special provision is made for lone parents within the social security system. Unlike their counterparts in many European countries, if they are on income support they can choose whether to work and to do whatever is in their children's best interests. Many wish to work and about one third of all family credit recipients are lone parents. They receive the same rate credit as a couple, and one-parent benefit is disregarded in the calculation of family credit. The most lasting and worthwhile contribution that the Government can make to lone parents and their children, who we all agree may be vulnerable, is to ensure that the absent parent, usually the father, makes a realistic contribution to the maintenance of the children. The Government are doing that through their review of

maintenance and the across-the-board review involving the Lord Chancellor's Department, the Home Office, the measures introduced in the Social Security Bill and the administrative measures which are already in force in our benefits offices.

Mention has been made of housing and homeless young people. As I have said a number of times in the House, there is no need for 16 and 17-year-olds to be without an income. I am astonished that Opposition Members should seek in any way to encourage young people to go straight from school into the benefit culture. The whole point of the change made by the Government was to discourage such a trend. We have made many adjustments to the interaction of YTS and income support in response to points made by voluntary bodies. We are also tackling in particular the problem of families forced to live in bed-and-breakfast hotels. It is clearly wrong that such accommodation should be used for families except in an emergency or for very short periods and that is why we shall inject £250 million over the next two years into schemes in London and the south-east aimed at reducing that need. Clearly, every effort must be made to reduce the tragedy of young people leaving home or care to end up walking the streets of London. We are looking closely at how our policies work together with a view to ensuring that appropriate assistance is available, and further announcements will be made shortly.

The Government have over the past decade consistently pursued a range of policies across Departments to improve and foster the welfare of children, in the firm belief that the family is the foundation of our society. Basic to that belief have been our economic achievements, which have improved the prosperity of the majority of families and have enabled us to help families who are less fortunate. The Children Act 1989 is the most comprehensive child care legislation ever enacted by Parliament. There have been significant increases in spending on education for children of statutory school age and the under-fives. We have increased spending on the family through social security benefits by more than a quarter in the past decade to nearly £10 billion. The Labour Government's shameful record shows that they cut that help by nearly 10 per cent. during their period of power. Those achievements are real and practical and they are happening, and I ask hon. Members to reject the motion.

9.45 pm

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): The hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) and one or two other Conservative Members said that it was a disgrace that a debate on the welfare of children had been reduced to half a day. That was both right and wrong. It was certainly never planned as anything more than a half-day's debate. I agree, however, that it is a disgrace that in 11 years of this Conservative Government the first debate on the general welfare of children had to be initiated by the Opposition, not the Government.

We have heard many proud boasts, but as we approach the last decade of the 20th century we now lag behind every other comparable modern democracy in the treatment of our young people from cradle to college. The hon. Members for Lancaster and for Southport (Mr. Fearn), my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) and others mentioned child poverty and the Minister responded—it was the only part of the debate to which she responded. There are more than 12 million children in Great Britain. For many—indeed, most—childhood is a happy and a secure time, but for millions, unfortunately, it is other than that. As we enter the last decade of this century, it is a tragic fact that almost 75 per cent. of families on benefit, many with young children, now have to borrow to make ends meet, that 56 per cent. cannot meet their bills on time and that over half have to borrow for large expenses or have fallen behind with debt repayments. We discovered recently in a pamphlet issued by Conservative central office that much of this poverty is "self-induced"—once again, a lecture from those who constantly lecture the shoeless of the world to pull themselves up by their bootstraps. That poverty is not self-induced, but it is often Government produced.

The Government do not need a crystal ball to see where their policies are leading. It is in their own books and those of others. A Policy Studies Institute survey has shown hat 50. per cent. of couples on benefit run out of money halfway through every week and that 60 per cent. of them lack a complete standard set of clothing—not a Picasso or a Porsche, but a basic decent standard set of clothing. *[Interruption.]* The reaction of Conservative Members does not surprise me. The poverty of people has always been a laughing matter for others in this society.

A MORI survey showed that 3 million people with children in their households are unable to heat their homes. The horrific impressions created by those independent figures are confirmed by the Government's figures, yet tonight we heard the usual lecture from the Minister, who told us that these factors are all relative. We constantly hear that poverty is relative. There is nothing like a philosophical discussion on poverty among those who have never suffered it. This shows, because in the same breath the Minister proudly boasted to us of the percentage increase in benefits available.

The Government may have missed something—the elementary point that percentages are also a relative term. One hundred per cent. of nothing is nothing. Even where the benefit targets are reached—often they are not—the benefits allowable for a young child do not meet even the minimum weekly costs of maintaining that child. According to objective observers, the minimum estimated cost of providing for a two-year-old child for a week is £12·17. The Government's income support allowance for that child is £11·75. The minimum estimated cost for providing for an eight-year-old is £16·82, but the Government's income support allowance is still £11·75. What kind of Government refuse to provide no more than 70 per cent. of the minimum cost for even the poorest families to raise an eight-year-old child? We must also bear in mind that all those benefits are now means tested.

The Government have targeted for gradual abolition the one universal, most effective and most important instrument for the alleviation of child poverty—child benefit. The Under-Secretary referred to the abolition of the uprating of benefit in a euphemism to which we have become used. She referred to it as last year's uprating exercise—an innovation for this Government. There have been three uprating exercises, but no uprating. Labour will restore those cuts in child benefit because that is right, just and long overdue.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddlesworth): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Reid: I am afraid that I am restricted by the time. The Under-Secretary gave way several times, largely because she did not respond to the debate. I am trying to do that.

I must disappoint the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Hicks) on the question of child care and education. The United Kingdom has one of the worst records in Europe of state provision of child care. Despite the references made by the Minister for Health to provision by the voluntary sector, only Ireland and Luxembourg are worse in their state provision for children aged two and under and only Portugal is worse than us in the provision for three and four-year-olds.

Of course we welcome the tax concessions made in the last Budget for workplace nursery schemes. Hon. Members on both sides of the House have been urging that for a long time. However, the Government should be under no illusions. The number of workplace nurseries is extremely small at the moment. Last year the Workplace Nurseries Campaign reported that there were only about 100 such nurseries in Great Britain, and only about 20 of those are provided by the much-vaunted private sector. More importantly, the care of children is too important to be treated merely as an adjunct to the flows and ebbs of the labour market. Child care provision is a litmus test of a modern civilised society. It should be a right in itself, not merely a means of ensuring a supply of female workers.

Almost half a century after the establishment of the National Health Service, social class still determines the chances of a child's survival. The Minister for Health referred to surveys and to falling infant mortality rates.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The standard of health care is determined by where someone lives. In Lancashire the average expectation of life is two years below the national average. However, in Lancaster it is a year above that. It depends on where one lives, as does the standard of education. It does not depend on social class.

Dr. Reid: To some extent it depends on where one lives, but to a much greater extent it depends on how one lives, and that includes housing and health. None of the Government's propaganda can cover up the overriding statistic that in the mid-1980s, 40 years after the formation of the NHS, babies of fathers in unskilled jobs were twice as likely to be stillborn or to die within their first year as babies of professional fathers.

The hon. Member for Lancaster made much of the pro-life movement. Life does not end at birth. If all British children, irrespective of class and social circumstances, enjoyed the same chances of survival, between 2,500 and 3,000 young lives would be saved in Britain every year. It is a scandal that they are not.

Mr. Dickens: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Reid: Time is restricted, and I am trying to reply to the debate.

A lack of education in parenthood and pre-parenthood and an overstretched and underfunded National Health Service and deprived housing and social conditions contribute to the problem. I do not claim that there is a simple solution. However, the reality is that there is a direct link between deprived social conditions and ill health among children. One of the most deprived conditions leading to ill health is homelessness.

Hon. Members have heard that, of more than 122,600 homeless households in priority need in Britain, 18,000 had dependent children, while another 17,000 households contained a member of the family who was expecting a child. Eighty per cent. of those homeless households involved children or expected children. For older children the latest estimate suggests that 150,000 16 to 19-year-olds experience homelessness each year, yet the Government cannot even tell us the number of homeless children on the streets of the major city of Britain.

When we ask the Government for statistics on missing children they tell us to go to the Children's Society. When we ask them for statistics on the number of illegally employed children they ask us to seek information from the Low Pay Unit. When we ask them how many children are left in the streets of London they tell us to phone the Salvation Army. It is not just that the Government are ignorant of the facts; they are woefully ignorant of the facts and will do nothing about it. They have done nothing about implementing the Employment of Children Act 1973, yet we know that about 80 per cent. of children's employment is now illegal.

We have heard the figure of 98,000 missing children. We are not pretending that every instance results in a child being permanently missing, but we are saying that 50 per cent. of runaway children go missing more than once, 7 per cent. are estimated to have engaged in prostitution, and 20 per cent. are reckoned to be involved in drug abuse. It is an absolute shame that the Government cannot even tell us how many children are missing in any month and must refer us to the voluntary sector.

Child abuse has been well covered tonight by my hon. Friends the Members for Wakefield, for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) and for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody). No matter how dreadful, how distasteful and how horrific, child abuse must occupy our minds. Again, we do not suggest that there are easy solutions. Nevertheless, we need to save the most vulnerable children.

We do not pit families against children, but we assert that there are many circumstances in which responsibility must fall on the Government because the families of abused children have already failed them. With the Children Act, we have seen the acceptance of parental responsibility. When parental responsibility has failed, we, on behalf of society, must act. The Children Act was welcomed by the Opposition and we fully supported many of its aspects. But how can we expect the Prime Minister or the Government to take on board society's responsibility when we have a Prime Minister who, 60,000 years after the first settlements in the Mesopotamian valley, still does not believe that society exists, far less has a responsibility?

Reference has been made to the convention on the rights of the child. Why were we given no timetable for ratification, no information on 1992 and its effects on the employment of labour, and no indication of moneys being allocated to road safety? Of course we support and admire the voluntary sector, but, above all, the voluntary sector needs a Government who are committed to partnership in the protection of children.

Hon. Members pride themselves on being a representative assembly. We represent some of the most vulnerable, disadvantaged sections of the community. We have men and women—too few of the latter. Our membership includes disabled people, some of whom speak with great

experience and knowledge of the disadvantages faced by the disabled. We have our fair share of old-age pensioners. Some would say that we have our fair share of the unemployed as well——

Mr. Dickens *rose——[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Dr. Reid: But there is one group in this country that has no voice and no vote. Children are the hope of the country and the backbone of the future of our country. The generations to come will judge that the Government have been lacking in their protection of our children.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 197, Noes 288.

Division No. 225] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barnes, Mrs Rosie *(Greenwich)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Mike
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fearn, Ronald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Leadbitter, Ted
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Martyn Jones.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim

Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Major, Rt Hon John
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Walden, George
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. David Lightbown.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

Mr. Speaker *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House welcomes the major programme of work in the child care and child protection field which the Government are overseeing and undertaking in co-operation with local government and the voluntary sector, backed up by the Children Act 1989, which will establish an improved court system for children and a new balance between public support of children within their families and action to protect children from abuse and neglect, and families from unwarranted intrusion by the state; and welcomes other initiatives such as the reformed system of social security which targets help more effectively on the least well off among families with children.

Teachers' Pay and Conditions

10.15 pm

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. John MacGregor): I beg to move,

That the draft Education (School Teachers' Pay and Conditions) Order 1990, which was laid before this House on 11th May, be approved.

[Interruption.]

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will those hon. Members not remaining for the debate please leave quietly?

Mr. MacGregor: The order will give effect to the school teachers' pay and conditions document 1990, which sets out the rates of pay and conditions of service to apply in state schools in 1990-91.

The publication of the 1990 pay and conditions document will complete a process that began in September 1989, when I asked the interim advisory committee to advise on teachers' pay in 1990-91. As the House knows, apart from asking it to consider what general pay increase should be given to teachers, I gave it more specific remits: to look especially at ways of further increasing flexibility within the pay system, improving the career structure and helping local education authorities to tackle geographical and subject teacher shortages—giving special consideration to the problems in London—and to review specifically the pay of heads and deputies.

In my view, the committee has fulfilled its remit admirably and produced the third in what has been a series of excellent reports. The committee endorsed the thinking underlying the present pay structure—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I ask hon. Members either to listen to the debate or to continue their conversations outside the Chamber.

Mr. MacGregor: The committee endorsed the thinking underlying the present pay structure, and made recommendations intended to carry it even further into practice. It concluded that, although the recent improvements to the pay structure had all been in the right direction, more needed to be done to provide LEAs and governing bodies with sufficient flexibility to tackle the needs of individual schools, to reward responsibility and high performance, to respond to changing circumstances and to provide attractive career prospects for able and ambitious teachers, whether they want to stay in the classroom or prefer to move to senior management positions.

The interim advisory committee made far-reaching proposals for change: those are the words that it used, and I agree. Its report reaffirmed the value and importance of incentive allowances, and boosted their number and value. In addition, however, it proposed that LEAs and governing bodies should be able to enhance the standard incremental pay of individual teachers on the main scale on an annual basis, and that it should be possible to adopt and use a local extension of the main scale to enhance the pay of teachers on the top of the scale. It also clearly identified the need for greater recognition of differences in the circumstances of schools, and in the performance of individuals, in the way in which heads and deputies are paid. It proposed that the present system of spot salaries should be replaced by a system of range pay.

I received the report on 30 January, and announced on 1 February that I proposed to accept its recommendations in full——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is desirable for county councils such as Lancashire to spend less on administration and to devote more to giving incentive payments to teachers, as my right hon. Friend and the advisory committee recommend?

Mr. MacGregor: I shall be commenting on that later. Under local management of schools, there is greater flexibility for schools to do that. Clearly, making full use of what is available as a result of the report is an important priority for LEAs.

I accept the report's recommendations in full, but decided to stage their introduction in the same way as for the review body groups, because of affordability within public expenditure totals for this year. It is worth noting, however, that by far the major part of the proposals will be implemented on 1 April—if the order is approved tonight and in another place—and some at the beginning of September. They will all be implemented in full from 1 January 1991. The overall cost in 1990-91 will be £620 million, and would be £733 million in a full year.

The speed with which I accepted the report clearly demonstrated my approval of the committee's whole approach and the Government's commitment to tackling with determination the issues of teachers' pay and supply. The speed with which we have moved since in terms of the consultation process and bringing the order before the House as quickly as we could shows that we are also keen to get the changes legitimised and in place for all teachers as quickly as possible. I know that some local education authorities are paying the new rates at the moment in the hope and assumption that the order will go through.

Section 3 of the Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1987 requires consultations with interested parties before the proposals can be implemented. I considered carefully the points made to me by the teacher unions and the employers, orally and in writing, and as a result have made a number of further minor modifications to the interim advisory committee recommendations that are incorporated in the draft document which accompanies the draft order.

They include placing certain deputy heads on a point higher on the new pay spine, which will give some 4,000 deputies an extra £300 on 1 January. The pay ranges for heads and deputies in small schools will be extended by one point. The six months qualifying service that entitles part-time teachers and teachers on short notice contracts to increments must be within one year, but will not now need to be continuous. I have accepted all those points in response to the recommendations made to me.

My acceptance of the interim advisory committee's recommendations means that teachers will receive substantial pay increases. By January 1991, heads and deputies will have seen their pay rise by up to 12·2 per cent. since March 1990. This will mean an increase of some £3,000 for a typical secondary head and £2,000 for a typical primary head. From 1 January, under the new system of range pay, local education authorities and governing bodies will have flexibility to recognise the demands of the job and the performance of the individual in the way in which they pay heads and deputies.

[Mr. MacGregor]

I believe that the changes to general salary grades have been sensitively handled by the committee and skilfully targeted. For new teachers, salaries will increase by up to 11·8 per cent. A good honours graduate will start on £10,503, or £12,003 in inner London. Teachers on the top of the scale will receive 8·9 per cent. There will be a further 14,400 new incentive allowances, bringing the total to 189,000 in primary and secondary schools. The value of the four higher rate incentive allowances will increase by 17 per cent.

That is not all. From 1 January, local education authorities and governing bodies will be able to award an incremental enhancement of up to £999 to any classroom teacher, provided that the value of the next incremental point is not exceeded. Local education authorities will be able to put in place local extensions to the standard scale and thereby raise the top point from £16,000 to £18,000. Overall, teachers will, on average, have seen an increase in their pay of 50 per cent. since March 1986 as soon as the proposals are fully in operation.

The improvements, used imaginatively and effectively, will mean better career prospects for good teachers, better matching of rewards with contribution and greatly enhanced scope for effective local decision taking. They will offer better rewards for the teacher in mid-career to whose needs the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts recently drew attention.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): It is impossible to hear the Secretary of State say that teachers' pay has increased by 50 per cent. since 1986 without expressing real admiration. I am bound to think back to the years 1974 to 1979. In 1974, I received the Houghton award, which the Labour party has trumpeted so often as so marvellous, but it was lost within almost a year because of 27 per cent. inflation. We were all worse off in 1979 than we were in 1974 when Labour took office.

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend speaks from knowledge and personal experience, and he is quite right. That compares with an increase in real terms of about 30 per cent. for teachers under this Government.

The improvements will also give local education authorities and governors much more flexibility to respond effectively to local recruitment and retention problems. In inner London, where the problems in some parts are especially acute, there will also be a new discretionary pay settlement of £750. I recognise, as did the committee, that the introduction of a more flexible pay system places particular responsibilities on local decision takers. There will sometimes be difficult choices to be made, but that is in the nature of a more local and flexible system. If local management is about anything it is about the targeting of resources where they are most needed and will do most good. I said that earlier, in response to my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman). It is the negation of good management to share out additional flexibilities according to Buggin's turn, and I hope that governing bodies and head teachers will resist such pressures and will not do that.

Pay flexibility and pay differentiation have a key role to play in improving morale and in tackling specific and local shortages. The new flexibilities will greatly increase the capacity for local management to manage. They represent a real step forward in our ability to create and sustain the kind of teaching force that we need for the future.

I am glad to have the opportunity to pay tribute once again to the interim advisory committee for the clarity of its analyses and the force of its recommendation in pointing the way ahead. I am most grateful to Lord Chilver and the members of his committee, not only for the time and care that they devoted to their tasks, but for the skilful and clear-sighted way in which they assessed the evidence, analysed the issues and produced carefully worked out recommendations. It is a tribute to the committee that many teachers have told me that they greatly value the work that it carried out and think that it might not be possible to get such a good career and pay structure in place without the committee's work.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): My right hon. Friend is right to pay tribute to the excellent work of the interim advisory committee. As a serving teacher for many years at the time when the Burnham committee used to operate, may I ask my right hon. Friend whether he agrees that that system did not work well for the teaching profession? The new system and that which replaces it will work a great deal better. My right hon. Friend is right to pay tribute to the members of the committee for their imagination and for the kind of report that they have produced.

Mr. MacGregor: I agree. There is widespread acceptance of the view that the Burnham committee did not work. I agree that the interim advisory committee has produced a much better structure and in so doing has skilfully carried out the remit that we gave it. The committee and the Government saw eye to eye on the actual needs, and I am grateful to the committee for that.

I shall now turn to the future pay machinery. Last December, in the debate on the Teachers' Pay and Conditions Act 1987 (Continuation) Order 1989, I referred to the discussions that I had recently completed with the teacher unions and employers on new pay machinery. In the light of those discussions, I announced on 26 April my proposals for new permanent negotiating machinery. I have today held the last of a series of constructive meetings with unions and employers. However, it is clear from the meeting that there is still a great deal of disagreement about the way forward. I shall now consider carefully the best way forward in the light of the differing views expressed to me. It remains my aim to introduce legislation early in the next Session of Parliament.

The order clearly sets out the Government's position. We have made clear the changes in structure that we have been putting in place and are further addressing. They are major advances in a single year. What do we get from the Opposition? Since the Labour party is making such play of its new policy document, it is legitimate to look to that to see what Labour has to say. The document is not very illuminating. It says:

> "As resources allow, we will ensure that teachers who make a long-term commitment to their profession are properly rewarded."

Precisely what does that mean? The whole point of the structural changes that we are making is to give greater rewards to those who make a long-term commitment, who take the key jobs and the greater responsibilities and who

demonstrate classroom excellence. That is the thrust of what I am saying and what the committee has been recommending.

I put two questions to the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw). First, what different structural changes——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The hon. Member is not listening to my right hon. Friend.

Mr. MacGregor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Her intervention has made the hon. Gentleman concentrate. First, what different——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: The hon. Member for Blackburn is still not listening.

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman is clearly anxious not to listen.

First, what different structural changes is he proposing? We have been specific and we look to see whether the hon. Gentleman is. Secondly, is he promising anything—I repeat, anything—in terms of extra money? Again, we look to him to be specific. If he is not promising anything in terms of extra money, we shall rightly conclude that his speech is meaningless and that he is only offering never, never land.

If the Opposition are to criticise the measures that we are putting before the House, no one will pay any attention to what they say unless we have answers to the questions that I have posed. I look forward to the response of the hon. Member for Blackburn. I ask the House to approve the order so that we can ensure that teachers have the 1990-91 pay increases which I have recommended.

10.30 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): Our education system faces an unprecedented crisis. According to the report of the senior chief inspector of schools which was published in February, one third of our children—over 2 million—are getting a "raw deal" from the education system over which the Government have presided for 11 years. Two thirds of all pupils in secondary schools, according to the report, have to learn in unsuitable accommodation. We are told that only just less than half the problems were

"adversely and seriously affecting the quality of work in one way or another."

Research conducted by the National Foundation for Educational Research for *The Mail on Sunday* concluded that the education system was in danger of collapse, with parents

"providing a support system of nearly £40 million for primary schools."

The report states that without that many primary schools could not keep going. It tells us that

"most of the money is being used to fund the Government's new National Curriculum. One third of all money spent in schools on books and equipment comes from parents. Nearly one sixth of all schools surveyed are raising more money from parents than they receive from the State. A sixth are levying 'voluntary' contributions from parents."

Central to the near collapse—according to *The Mail on Sunday*—lies the condition of the teaching service. Never has morale in the service been lower. Never have fewer people wanted to train to teach. Never have so many teachers wanted to leave the profession. Never has the service been so overburdened with meretricious, divisive and ill-thought-out changes such as local management of schools and an inflexible national curriculum. Never has there been a Government whose conduct of the education service has been so prejudiced and incompetent that it has reduced a once fine service to the point of near collapse.

The extent of the crisis in teacher recruitment, retention and morale is terrifying. The proportion of graduates entering teaching across the country has halved in eight years from 8 per cent. to 4 per cent. At Cambridge university, the number of graduates entering teacher training has halved in a year. In 1988, 83 graduates in Cambridge took up teacher training. There were only 45 last year.

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that this evening the Opposition will vote against a measure that is worth £733 million to teachers? Will he tell the House what he would do were he in office? Will he tell us something about the contents of the Labour party's policy document?

Mr. Straw: Yes, I will tell the House, and I shall come to that point in my own time. I understand why Conservative Members will not acknowledge the extent of the crisis in education that they have produced, but they had better understand the near collapse, in the words of *The Mail on Sunday*, to which have they brought the education service.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke) *rose*——

Mr. Straw: No, I will not give way to the hon. Gentleman. I am giving the hon. Gentleman and other Conservative Members a few facts about the extent of that collapse and about the problems——

Mr. MacGregor: Will the hon. Gentleman allow me to intervene?

Mr. Straw: I will, in a moment. I am giving the facts about the problems confronting teacher training institutions in recruiting decent graduates and other entrants.

According to the 2 May issue of *The Economist*, the London Institute of Education—the largest training institution in the country—managed to make only 17 offers for the 65 available places in mathematics; only eight offers for 20 places in economics; and 24 offers for 65 places in the sciences. As the Select Committee pointed out, 40 per cent. of those who enter teacher training fail to go into the profession even after four years, and half of those who do leave it within five years.

I will give way now to the Secretary of State, and perhaps he will tell the House whether he believes that those figures are a satisfactory account of his stewardship of the education service.

Mr. MacGregor: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the figure of £40 million of parental support that he gave —if it is correct—is less than 1 per cent. of the total that the Government and local education authorities are putting into primary schools? How can he possibly describe that as near collapse?

Mr. Straw: The Secretary of State's comment only shows how ignorant he is of the state of Britain's schools. The report to which I referred was written not by the Labour party but by the National Foundation for Educational Research for a Conservative newspaper, *The Mail on Sunday*. If the Secretary of State does not believe that report, he had better look at previous reports of the senior chief inspector, who pointed out in last year's report

[Mr. Straw]

that many schools receive more by way of income from parents than by way of capitation for books and equipment from local education authorities.

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): That is a wonderful thing.

Mr. Straw: That situation is the responsibility of the present Government.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A Conservative Member described the increasing parental contribution to the essential needs of schoolchildren as "wonderful". Is it not in order for the House to know which Conservative Member made that remark?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Mr. Straw. *[Laughter.]*

Mr. Straw: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman who made that remark will admit to it, if he has the guts to do so.

It is increasingly difficult to recruit both the number and quality of entrants required to teacher training colleges.

Mr. Key: It was indeed I who said that it is wonderful that parents are contributing to schools.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Confession time is over. That is sufficient. Let us return to the debate.

Mr. Straw: This is only a short debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I know that many hon. Members in all parts of the House want to contribute. I have already given way twice, so I intend to proceed as quickly as possible.

The latest report of the interim advisory committee says that morale is even lower than was noted in its reports of the previous two years. The committee noted that far more teachers are compelled to take second jobs—having to moonlight—than ever before. It also said that teachers' commitment to their job is closer to breaking point.

Faced with that crisis in our schools, with the culpable neglect of school buildings, with the neglect of expenditure on equipment and books, and above all with a gratuitous neglect of the education of our children, what is the Government's response? Is it to recognise the nature of the crisis? Is it to start to reward teachers properly? No—it is none of those things. It is to cut the real pay of teachers. Conservative Members had better recognise that by voting for the order they will be voting for a real terms cut in the pay of teachers. The authority for that comes not from me, but from the interim advisory committee report [HON. MEMBERS: "Rubbish".]

When Conservative Members cry, "Rubbish", it only illustrates the level of their ignorance about the state of the service and about the teachers' pay for which they are voting.

In paragraph 4(3), the interim advisory committee said that even if inflation were to fall back to 7·5 per cent.—it is two percentage points above that—at the end of the financial year, as forecast by the Government, the majority of teachers will be worse off than a year previously, whatever happens in 1990-91. The order will increase the total pay bill by only 7·9 per cent. during the next year. Inflation is running at 9·4 per cent. Even Conservative Members, with their inadequate education, will understand by the comparison of those two figures that a real cut in pay will result from the order.

The Secretary of State has made much play of the suggestion that he is implementing the report in full. That is incorrect. He is delaying implementation of an inadequate report. He has said almost nothing about the fact that he is phasing in its implementation. His predecessor did not do that with the two previous reports.

The Secretary of State did not mention the fact that the additional cost of the report, over the cash limit of £600 million—an extra £20 million—will be borne, according to an answer which he gave me on 7 March, entirely by local education authorities, with the Government paying not a penny piece towards it. That was the nature of his answer. Perhaps the Secretary of State would like to explain how, if he is accepting the report, he does not accept responsibility for paying for the whole of it. We judge the Government by their deeds, not by the vacuity of their words.

The Secretary of State also did not address the fact that the cash limit was wholly inadequate. He asked me what we would have done. We would have ensured that there were negotiations between teachers and employers. Secondly, if we had inherited an interim advisory committee, or some such body, we would not have tied its hands or put it in a straitjacket before it started to consider teachers' pay and imposed upon it a prior cash limit of £600 million, which it says is inadequate.

What we would have done, and what the Select Committee recommended by saying that there should be more money for teachers, would be either to have allowed free negotiations between teachers and their employers, or had a review body of this kind, which would make a recommendation to the Government without a prior cash limit. The one absolute guarantee that I give is that we would not have presided at any stage over real cuts in teachers' pay. Teachers know that from our record—from Houghton and from Clegg.

As ever, the Secretary of State produced his ritual incantation of fiddled figures which allege that teachers have never had it so good, and how wonderfully teachers' pay has increased since 1986, when large increases were forced out of the Government after two years of industrial action after their pay had been declining for years.

If the Secretary of State were to examine graphs A and B in the Select Committee report, he would notice two things. First, since 1986, under the wonderful interim advisory committee system teachers' pay has only remained stable in real terms and is now declining in real terms. Secondly, if the Secretary of State examines graph B in the Select Committee's report he will see, above all, how severely teachers' pay has declined, compared with other groups.

It is extraordinary that Conservative Members of Parliament should be so blind to the workings of the labour market in which people make job decisions not just on absolute levels of pay but on what they are likely to get elsewhere.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Straw: No.

I understand why Conservative Members do not want to acknowledge that by means of the order they will be cutting teachers' pay.

No one has ever gone into teaching for the money. In the past, however, teachers expected, and received, remuneration that was more reasonable compared with other groups. They also enjoyed the non-financial rewards of the respect and esteem of the wider community. But during the past 11 years Conservative Ministers and Members of Parliament have systematically insulted and abused teachers; they have undermined public confidence in teachers and their own confidence in themselves.

Mr. Key: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Straw: No.

Conservatives have done that for 10 years. The Secretary of State for Education and Science was put into his job to try to repair the damage caused by his predecessor. Until last week he tried to avoid abusing and insulting teachers, but when he stood up to deliver a keynote address at the National Association of Head Teachers conference last week, half-way through he departed from his carefully prepared text, designed to placate head teachers, and insulted and abused teachers by suggesting that they should regard themselves as small business men and that schools should turn themselves into some kind of corner shop. I hope that the Secretary of State appreciates the damage that he has done to himself in the eyes of head teachers.

Mr. MacGregor: I was there. I saw that many of them undertstood the point that I was making. The hon. Gentleman's misrepresentation of what I said is utterly grotesque. I said that other groups, such as small businesses, which I know well, had to respond to substantial changes by working long hours, taking risks and facing difficulties. That was my point, and it was understood by the audience.

Mr. Straw: That was exactly the point that the Secretary of State made, and it went down like a lead balloon at the NAHT conference. It is crass in the extreme —[HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"]. I shall tell Conservative Members why it is crass in the extreme to imply that schools can be compared with small businesses. Small businesses face severe difficulties because of the Government's economic policies. More businesses are going bankrupt than has happened for many years. Teachers and parents are suspicious of the Government's motives. They believe that the Government are trying to establish a two-tier system under which market forces will operate, with children being treated like commodities. The Secretary of State's speech to the NAHT conference, as many people have told me, confirmed their suspicions. It is because of those suspicions that support for the Government's education policies has collapsed severely during the past three years while support for Labour's policies has increased.

It is well known that, whatever Ministers may say about the excellence of their administration of the state education system during the past 11 years, it is still not good enough for them to use.

Mr. Key: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Straw: The hon. Gentleman is not a Minister. It may be good enough for other people's children, but it is certainly not good enough for the generality of Ministers' children.

Mr. Key: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is not seeking to mislead the House, but he is doing so. Many Conservative Members, including myself, use their local state schools.

Mr. Straw: As *The Sunday Times*, another Conservative newspaper, pointed out, the overwhelming majority of Conservative Ministers have sent and continue to send their children to private schools. What reveals the appalling double standards of those Ministers and the Government is that, while forcing down the real pay of teachers in the maintained sector and the budgets of local education authorities which pay those teachers, the Government are increasing the state subsidy to private schools to enable them to pay salaries greatly in excess of those allowed by law to be paid in the maintained sector.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Straw: No.

The clerk to the governors of Dulwich college wrote to parents in March this year explaining why the fees at the school were to be increased to £4,035 per annum. He said:

> "Education . . . is labour intensive, and salaries and wages . . . are increasing at a greater rate than RPI . . . The importance of attracting and retaining staff of the highest calibre means that proper levels of salary must be paid, also reflecting the high costs of living in the area."

He then confirmed that fees were to be increased to £4,035.

That would be okay if those fees were being paid entirely by parents. But for 277 children at that school the fees are being paid, in whole or in part, by the Government. The Government have agreed to pay those fees without any cavilling. On the one hand the Government are paying fees of £4,035 per pupil to Dulwich college to enable it to pay its teachers much more than the salaries that they could command in the state system, while on the other the Secretary of State has connived at the poll tax capping of Rochdale, Doncaster, Wigan and Calderdale—all authorities that are paying less than £1,800 per pupil per annum.

The education of the nation's children depends above all on the quality and dedication of its teachers. The Government have systematically undermined and under-rewarded teachers while imposing more demands on them. In the debate which preceded this one, the Minister of State for Health said grandiloquently at the beginning of her speech that our children were our future and that we owed them a most sacred trust. That is certainly true, but the Government have broken faith with our teachers and in doing so have broken their trust to the nation's children. We oppose the motion. We want better pay for our teachers because we want a better education for our children.

[Mr. Straw]

10.52 pm

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) was even more negative than usual tonight. He made no mention of what his party would do about teachers' pay. He said only that some teachers who made long-term commitments to the profession would be properly rewarded if resources allowed. At no time did the hon. Gentleman say what those resources would be. I hope that those teachers who read our deliberations will take on board the fact that Opposition Members will not put a figure on what they would pay the teaching profession. They have left an enormous vacuum surrounding teachers' pay.

I come to tonight's debate with a feeling of some nostalgia as it is likely to be the last of its kind. The interim advisory committee is soon to be replaced by the new permanent pay negotiating machinery announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. The debate gives us the opportunity to see how teachers' pay has increased under the interim advisory committee. Its recent recommendations would add a total of 9·3 per cent. to the teachers' pay bill in a full year. The cost for 1990-91 will be almost 8 per cent. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, that means that teachers' pay will have increased by about 50 per cent. since 1986. My hon. Friends will agree that that is a substantial increase in anyone's language.

Despite that substantial increase, I am still far from convinced that teachers' pay accurately reflects their important role in society. The education of our children and young people is of the utmost importance. I remind the House yet again that the overwhelming majority of teachers are dedicated both to their profession and to the children in their charge. That answers the question posed by the hon. Member for Blackburn, who accused us of undermining and denigrating teachers. At no time have we done that.

Mr. Straw *rose*——

Mr. Pawsey: I shall give way. We recognise the importance of the teacher in the classroom. Now I give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Straw: The hon. Gentleman says that no Conservative Member has ever denigrated teachers. Will he explain why the present Secretary of State for the Environment, when Minister of State, Department of Education and Science, made a speech—which is in the Library—entitled, "Teachers encouraging a yob society"?

Mr. Pawsey: If that quotation is accurate, I think that that was a reference to some of the recent scenes at, for example, teacher conferences, but I shall deal with that point later.

The House will be aware that the reforms introduced by my right hon. and hon. Friends will do a great deal to enhance the quality and standard of state education. We have taken on the great debate which was started by the Opposition. The difference between the two sides is that while they talked about it we have done something about it.

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): I would not like my hon. Friend to think that the great debate on educational standards was started by the Opposition. It was started by the Council for Educational Standards.

Mr. Pawsey: I am obliged to my hon. Friend for that correction. I was thinking of the speech by Lord Callaghan in 1976.

The national curriculum, local management of schools and teacher assessment are all added responsibilities with which the teacher force must grapple. It is worth reminding the House that, despite our good intentions, despite our reforms, despite all our legislation, all that will be as nothing if we do not enjoy the full-hearted support and co-operation of the nation's teachers.

I come now to the intervention by the hon. Member for Blackburn. I am interested to see that, so much notice does he take of our debates, he is reading a newspaper.

Teachers are not always their own best advocates. The recent teacher conferences have done little to enhance the esteem in which individual teachers or the reputation of the profession is held. The spectacle of, for example, the general secretary of the National Union of Teachers being howled down by his own militant leftists was disgraceful. Teachers must understand that if they wish to be regarded as a profession and remunerated as a profession, they must act as a profession. The public do not always see them on a par with doctors or architects, because doctors and architects seldom demonstrate with marches, banners and loudspeakers. Other professionals prefer to pursue their grievances more responsibly.

The Government are introducing educational reforms, and there is an argument that perhaps we are progressing more rapidly than some would like. We do not have to look far for the reasons for the reforms. We are anxious that improvements in schooling should be implemented with the least possible delay so that the maximum number of the nation's children can benefit and in the shortest time.

I suspect that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will agree that some of the reforms have been so carefully wrapped in red tape both by the Department of Education and Science and, especially, by local education authorities that the package of reform itself is in danger of being lost. I doubt whether there is a need for so many forms which take up an increasing amount of teacher time. The number of leaflets, pamphlets and booklets produced by the bureaucrats has tended to swamp the profession. It would be helpful if my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State could reduce the weight of paper that is currently submerging the profession. I say that in the clear knowledge that he is already doing something towards that.

I welcome the recommendations of the interim advisory committee and I note that the pay bill will be £733 million more than last year. Incidentally, that is £133 million more than the interim advisory committee recommendation. That figure must reflect the greatest credit on my right hon. Friend. He has persuaded the Treasury to cough up an extra £133 million and that substantial sum reflects the greatest credit on his persuasive abilities.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): Many of us had misgivings about the interim advisory committee three years ago. As my hon. Friend said, this may well be the last debate of this nature. However, does he agree that the

interim advisory committee and the Government have done very well by the teaching profession over those three years?

Mr. Pawsey: I would not quarrel for a moment with my hon. Friend. He is absolutely right. The interim advisory committee has done a splendid job and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was right to compliment it.

It is worth remembering that, under the interim advisory committee's awards, the starting salary for a good honours graduate will be about £12,000 a year in inner London. The awards will provide increases of at least 20 per cent. for teachers who are not at the top of the main scale. Above all, the committee's awards will be worth on average almost 10·5 per cent. for almost all 60,000 head teachers and their deputies.

The hon. Member for Blackburn clearly and totally misunderstands the problem and he misunderstands the challenge that is being put to head teachers. He seeks to denigrate my right hon. Friend's comments about head teachers and their work. He is wrong to do that. The additional money for head teachers reflects the additional importance of a head teacher's job under the local management of schools proposal.

I support LMS, and I believe that funding should follow the pupil and be pupil led. Pupils of the same age should attract the same resources, irrespective of the school that they attend. Heads are taking on a greater management role. Although that represents something of a departure, it will be a significant step forward.

Surely head teachers must know best what actually happens in their schools. They know who the conscientious teachers are and they know the day-to-day problems. They will be in the best position to do something about them. Therefore, it is only right that the additional management responsibility be recognised in the monthly pay packet.

The hon. Member for Blackburn referred to the considerable concern about teacher shortages. I hope that the interim advisory committee's latest recommendations help to make the teaching profession more attractive to graduates.

Incidentally, it is noteworthy that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has written to the Universities Funding Council asking it to take note of a planned increase in initial teacher training for the next three years. It is just possible that critics will say that planning is one thing and attainment is something else, yet it is fair to remember that recruitment to teacher training courses rose by about 8 per cent. in 1989. Teacher shortages are not all that common. For example, in my county of Warwickshire, the number of teacher vacancies in January last year was 31. In January of this year it was 25. To get those two figures into perspective, that is out of a teacher force of 3,677.

I welcome the statutory instrument and I certainly hope that it will encourage entrance to the teaching profession.

11.4 pm

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Before Conservative Members start shouting the Opposition down, it is necessary to put the record straight about the interim advisory committee. The Secretary of State always funks doing that. In 1987, his predecessor, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), found that normal trade union and employer negotiations were not working out to the Government's satisfaction. He then did something for which the Government were rightly condemned by the United Nations body, the International Labour Organisation. I have made it clear on many occasions that there would never have been an interim advisory committee if the Government had not refused to engage in proper negotiations with teachers. No other western Government have refused to negotiate with teachers, trade unions and employers.

The Government then hand-picked a committee. It is a farce. There is no negotiating of any kind. That committee was imposed on teachers, and, even though the committee was hand-picked, its recommendations were not accepted by the Government. The Secretary of State is pretending that its recommendations were accepted, but he knows that they were not. He is offering less money than the committee wanted him to offer. The figure is miles behind inflation. A figure of 13·5 per cent. in real terms would be required to return to the 1987 position, and 14 per cent. in real terms would be required to return to the position that obtained in 1974.

When the Government withdrew teachers' negotiating rights—they have still not given them back—they committed an undemocratic action. *[Interruption.]* No amount of shouting at me can change that fact.

Meanwhile, the situation has become so serious that the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts recently published one of its most important reports on teacher shortages. A whole section of that report is missing because we could not get it approved by the majority of Tories on the Committee, who prevented our minority report from being released for nearly a year.

The present Chairman is the second one, because the first was hounded out by the Tory majority on the Committee. That is a fact. I nominated the present Chairman, and my colleagues seconded the motion—the Chairman is present; he can tell the House—and they walked out of the room and did not return, even though we were to meet the Minister the next day. There are many things that we did not want in the report and many things that should be in the report but are not.

There is a growing crisis in the recruitment and training of teachers, and it must be taken into account. The problem is national, widespread, and inextricably linked with inadequate salary levels, bad conditions and scarce resources under this Government. *[Interruption.]* No amount of shouting will change that. I have heard the Secretary of State and his hon. Friends praising the head teachers, but they are talking rubbish. The speech made by Mr. Hart, the general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, is the biggest roistering ever given to a Government by the head teachers, who for years have been the darlings of this Government, but who have now completely changed their opinions.

It was Mr. Hart who said that the teacher shortage was a "crisis", approaching a "catastrophe". Everybody that the Select Committee met used the word "crisis". Only one person said that there was no crisis—the senior official of the Department of Education and Science. My hon. Friends who served on the Committee are present and know that to be true, as do Conservative Members who have said the same thing themselves.

One of the three interim advisory committee reports that was praised stated:

[Mr. Martin Flannery]

"Any profession would be justifiably proud of the level of commitment on the part of teachers we have met during our school visits during all 3 years. However, commitment cannot by itself guarantee the success of the current reforms. It needs to be underpinned by far higher morale than we have found. Too many teachers feel that their efforts are under-valued by the Government, the employers, parents, and society generally."

In 1988, the interim advisory committee drew the link between proper professional levels of pay and problems of recruitment, stating:

"We are in no doubt that pay levels are the major factor."

The Secretary of State praises the committee but he does not carry out the policies that his own hand-picked committee suggests to put teachers' pay levels right.

Surely it is now clear that teachers know that they are grossly underpaid. Let us have no nonsense about it. They know it and are miserable about it. They are overworked. They have to attend endless meetings, during their lunch hours and after school. They have to be at school earlier than ever before and have to spend endless more hours marking. Their morale is at its lowest ever ebb. The hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Bennett) can laugh and laugh —*[Laughter.]* Indeed, he cannot stop laughing, but the reality is that——

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South) *rose*——

Mr. Flannery: No, I shall not give way, because there is so little time. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will be called. Indeed, he has received a lot of fame in the past few days on College green—*[Interruption.]* Well, not about education.

There are vacancies in schools throughout the country. The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) must know that he was talking rubbish. What he said is not true. Where 20 people used to apply for a job in a school, now only one or two people may apply. The hon. Gentleman said that he likes local management of schools, but I must advise him that teachers are now learning what it is really like. In addition to the existing teacher shortages, local management of schools is adding to the problems. For example, one school in my constituency was £18,000 short last year and now has to sack either one or two teachers. Often the teachers who are sacked to save money are the most expensive teachers—those who have been teaching for a long time, and the very ones who are so urgently needed if we are to raise standards.

In addition to the teacher shortage that our Select Committee report sought to remedy, unless something is done, we will lose teachers because of LMS. I have heard the Secretary of State trying to explain that away. People who do not understand the issues might accept his explanations, but those of us who do understand know what rubbish the right hon. Gentleman is talking. The teachers are all aware of that—they have all sized him up —yet the right hon. Gentleman still follows his predecessor's footsteps, albeit fairly skilfully. They have done the same thing—they have made our education system into a terrible mess.

The position is worsening every day. Not only is morale lower than ever, but it is getting ever lower. All hon. Members know that that is what is happening, even if some of them try to pretend that it is not. The Government must recognise the growing damage that is being inflicted on our children's education. Let us be clear about this: it is not their children. One or two Tory Members may send their children to state schools, but——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman *rose*——

Mr. Flannery: Be quiet, dear.

The Government are inflicting the damage on our children, not their children. They pay £7,000, £8,000 or £9,000 for their kids to go to special schools, yet they take thousands off our children while talking a lot of nonsense. That is what goes on and they know it, and I am saying so. As the shortages worsen, the Government further exacerbate them by LMS.

The poll tax will hit education more than any other area. Education is one of the biggest spenders of what were local rates. Again, it is our children who will be hit. It will cause hundreds of redundancies. It is as though the Government have a death wish for state education which they will work out.

The Minister knows that the Government have imposed a cash limit of £6 million on the IAC's recommendations for this year. The offer is only 7·5 per cent., yet inflation is 9·4 per cent. The Government said that the offer was against a background of the falling rate of inflation. They say that they are coming to grips with it, but it is heading up to 10 per cent. If the offer was low because of a falling rate of inflation, as it is rising will they please give the teachers much more money? The full award would be only 9·3 per cent.—still below the rate of inflation. How can that solve our education problems?

Even to return to the 1988 position, the figure needs to be 13·8 per cent. We have costed this. We do not have to wait for the Government's costings. They are never correct. They do not tell the truth. To bring the figure back to Houghton levels, we need 40 per cent. on top of the present offer. That is how much teachers' salaries have been eroded.

Education cannot thrive in such an atmosphere. It is bound to go downhill. We cannot recruit, retain and motivate teachers with such an appalling lack of insight and in the atmosphere that dominates the Tory party. Despite all the evidence to the Select Committee, the Government continue to believe that teacher shortages are hitting only certain subjects and certain areas. That is untrue. There is a shortage in all areas and all subjects. All six teacher unions met last autumn and gave the lie to that claim, and our Front Bench survey bore them out.

If the crisis in the teaching profession is not to deepen further and endanger our children's education, this Government, who see that their children have plenty of money, must release the necessary funds to make teachers' salaries competitive with those of other professions. The numbers will fall and we will have to offer more money to attract more teachers. The interim advisory committee and the Select Committee both asked for more money. *[Interruption.]* Has the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) something wrong with his right hand over there —yon Sherwood forester? I call him a Sherwood forester, but he would tie Robin Hood up and hand him over to the sheriff.

There is no other way to advance the great cause of our children's education. I appeal to the Tory party: if the Lady is not for turning, for God's sake, is there any among you who will turn and give us a decent education system?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This is a very short debate, and short speeches are appropriate. I call Mr. John Marshall.

11.18 pm

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): The London borough of Barnet, which I have the honour to represent and where my children are being educated in voluntarily aided schools, is consistently producing better examination results than any other local education authority in the country.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his initiatives—on refining the national curriculum, on pressing ahead with the introduction of city technology colleges and grant-maintained schools—which will introduce variety, choice and flexibility into the education system—and on achieving greater flexibility in teachers' pay. Although I welcome that latter development, I should like the Minister to deal briefly in his winding-up speech with the need for more regional variations in teachers' pay. The Nationwide Anglia survey of house prices for the first quarter of the year shows that the average price of a terraced house in London was £88,470, and the average price of a semi-detached house £100,450. In Yorkshire and Humberside, the average price of a semi was £50,810, and in the northern region it was £49,590.

A teacher in the north of England can expect to obtain a mortgage of perhaps £30,000; a teacher in London has not a hope in hell with a mortgage that size. The average after-tax cost of a £30,000 mortgage is £327 per month, while that of a mortgage of £55,000—which is probably typical for London—is £669 per month, or an extra £85 per week. I ask Ministers to bear that in mind in future: unless regional pay is increased, a new north-south divide will develop. Teachers in the south-east will sell their London homes, making a large capital gain, and move to the north in the knowledge that they can enjoy lower mortgages and a higher standard of life.

We need still more flexibility. My right hon. Friend was educated at St. Andrews university, where the emphasis on market economics was particularly strong. Let me tell him that a shortage of teachers of French, maths and science is no reason to pay more to teachers of Latin or social studies. If teachers of "shortage subjects" are not paid more, the entire curriculum will be put at risk.

The status of the profession is, I feel, in the hands of the profession itself. No one has more faith in the profession as a whole than I have; a small minority, however, is putting the profession's reputation in jeopardy. A few weeks ago, I received a letter from my children's head teacher which said that because of action by the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers the children would receive no schooling in two days' time. That is disgraceful. It merely aggravates the parents—especially mothers—who are inconvenienced. It interferes irresponsibly with children's education, and gravely damages the image of the profession.

The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) and others mentioned morale. In one section of the profession, however, morale is extremely high: I refer to grant-maintained schools. My right hon. Friend will remember paying a visit to Hendon school, the first grant-maintained school in London. Towards the end of that visit, a teacher approached him and said, "I am a member of the Labour party." I held my breath, wondering what would happen next. The teacher went on, "The best thing that has happened to this school has been becoming grant maintained."

Tonight we have heard the Opposition commit themselves to doing away with grant-maintained schools, city technology colleges and the private sector. What would that do for morale in the teaching profession? It would plummet to a new low. But that is what the Labour party stands for: it would do nothing for the education of our children, and nothing for morale in the teaching profession. Its proposed measures would be as productive as the abolition of the grammar schools. The grammar schools, we were told, would be abolished over Lord Wilson's dead body—and we all know what happened to them.

11.24 pm

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): The background to the debate is the present position in our schools. Some Conservative Members have referred to the professionals in the schools—*[Interruption.]*—not to mention the professionals in the Press Gallery. I have hardly started, but they are already falling apart up there.

I understand why some Conservative Members should discuss the experience of head teachers and in that context it is important to consider the letters that I received last year from head teachers in my constituency—a rural one with many small schools. Those letters referred to the distress that head teachers experienced in implementing the Government's reforms, and coping with lowered staff morale as well as with their loss of morale because of a feeling of lost status.

Occasionally a series of letters is sent as part of an orchestrated campaign to argue a particular case—often exaggerated to lend it more strength. I therefore visited each school in my constitutency to discover whether the possibility of resignations was real and to discuss the problems experienced.

Conservative Members are not prepared to accept that many teachers—not all—are suffering from low morale. A number of head teachers in my constituency have resigned citing pressure and low morale as their reasons. The Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts has highlighted similar problems affecting the retention and recruitment of teachers. No matter how hard Conservative Members argue that that is not so, it is the reality to which the debate must be addressed. Whether the Government's response has been adequate can be judged by how well they resolve those problems. We must ensure that they are solved so that our children receive a proper standard of education and we have enough teachers in the future to provide an adequate level of education.

Whatever criticisms Conservative Members may make of the teaching profession, it is to them that we entrust the education of our children. It is fundamental therefore to restore to them their negotiating rights. Tonight the Secretary of State has again referred to his intention to restore those rights—not before time, although the blame for that cannot be laid directly at his door. However, on 5 December when the current system for determining pay was extended by a further 12 months the Secretary of State said:

"It is necessary for the present arrangements to be in place for one more year."—[*Official Report*, 5 December 1989; Vol. 163, c. 271.]

[Mr. Matthew Taylor]

Although he has expressed his intention to replace the arrangements, it is rumoured that another extension order will be introduced because a Bill introduced in the next Queen's Speech might not be enacted by 31 March 1991. Can he guarantee that that Bill will be enacted in time to ensure that there will be no repetition of this debate? In the face of international law and the expressed Government intentions, will such a Bill be enacted or are the Government already preparing for a repetition of this debate? I remind the House that the Select Committee said that teachers' negotiating rights should be restored as soon as possible and that new arrangements for determining teachers' pay and conditions of service should be devised to allow the 1987 Act to expire in March 1991 at the latest. The extension of the system that we have already had is deplorable.

It is not true that the Government are implementing the interim advisory committee recommendations because on 1 February the Secretary of State for Education and Science announced that the Government proposed to accept the recommendations but that the introduction of the changes would be phased up to 1 January 1991. As a result, teachers will get increases that are lower than the rate of inflation. There is no point in looking at the result when in the process of reaching that result teachers will be worse off. That is in the face of recruitment, retention, and teacher supply problems. The interim advisory committee recommended not a phased increase but an immediate increase of 8·3 per cent. The Select Committee also said that the Government should implement the interim advisory committee recommendations in full and without delay. The Government are not doing that and that is directly increasing the problems in our schools.

The Government are not properly funding the recommendations. The IAC was given a remit of £600 million for its recommended pay increases. Its recommendation was for £733 million but, by delaying the increase, the Government will have to spend only £621 million this year. However, revenue support to local authorities was worked out on the basis of a pay award costing £600 million and the support grant settlement is not being revised. Once again, local authorities are being given a certain amount of money to cover a pay award ultimately imposed by the Government but are not being given the resources to pay for it. That is outrageous, especially when local authorities are blamed by Ministers for not being able to stay within Government targets.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Taylor: I shall give way in a moment, but before doing so it might be useful to reflect on what the Secretary of State for Education and Science said in a written answer to the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw):

"The additional cost in 1990-91 of implementing the IAC's recommendations in the way I have proposed would be £620 million in England and Wales compared with the financial constraint set out in the IAC's remit of £600 million. The difference should not be an appreciable burden for local authorities given the scope that exists for savings across their services."—[*Official Report*, 7 March 1990; Vol. 168, c. *627*.]

That is ridiculous. All hon. Members know about the problems that schools have in finding the resources to introduce the national curriculum, local management of schools and all the other matters.

I defy the Minister to find extra savings. He cannot do it because the whole system is already built on the basis of savings by local government. The Government are not providing funding for the additional incentives recommended in the interim advisory committee report, such as provision for additional flexibility to increase pay, commensurate enhancements and ranges of pay points.

The Government have allowed local authorities no cash to achieve those things and that is completely unacceptable if the Government genuinely believe in what the interim advisory committee is arguing to achieve. Of course, the Government do not genuinely believe in what the IAC seeks to achieve. Teachers will be worse off under the proposals. Local authorities do not have the money to make the system work and once again the Government have managed to achieve a real cut in teachers' pay.

Mr. Barry Porter: Just so that the House may judge the quality of the hon. Gentleman's remarks, can he tell us what percentage of the teaching population in his constituency has resigned over the past year?

Mr. Taylor: I do not have those figures, and nor do the Government. However, not only have I received letters from teachers whom I do not know, saying that they are resigning, but friends of mine have resigned from local authority teaching. These are not mythical creatures. These are real teachers and real professionals who have given up because they do not have the support that they believe they should have from the Government.

11.35 pm

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): The backcloth to this debate is the same as that of all our education debates —the increasing crisis in our education system. It is known to all parents and teachers, and only Tory Members fail to recognise it. As the Secretary of State's speech showed, Ministers are complacent about the growing problems in our schools. If the Secretary of State wants chapter and verse for that, he has no better source than the evidence prepared for, and submitted by, the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts, chaired by the hon. Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton). That report contains detailed analyses of the teacher shortages, and what that means for the quality of education. Those problems are growing.

The Secretary of State will say that the Government have taken action, such as introducing bursaries for the shortage subjects. However, as the Secretary of State and the Minister of State know, even in the bursary subjects, the Government are failing to reach their target figures for recruitment. For example, in its figures to the Select Committee, the Department predicted that there would be a shortfall of nearly 30 per cent. in the number of technology teachers by the year 1995, yet this year, on the latest available figures for the number of teachers taking up the technology bursary, there is a shortfall on the Government's recruitment targets of nearly 25 per cent. The hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) should not shake his head, because those figures come from the Department.

The shortfall in teacher supply is getting even more acute, and on top of that, as the Select Committee report showed clearly, there is a collapse in teacher morale, a point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) and the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor). It was, almost incidentally, recognised

by one or two Tory Members. That collapse in morale is not surprising. The Government have gone ahead with a whole range of reforms—wrapped in red tape, according to the hon. Member for Rugby (Mr. Pawsey)—that were never based on co-operation and consultation with teachers. They went against the grain of teacher professionalism and only now is the Secretary of State realising that he needs teacher support.

The Government have introduced the local management of schools. Every one of those schemes that the Secretary of State now criticises, he sanctioned. Each one of them is producing problems in schools. That is why, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hillsborough said, we hear stories of teacher redundancies, and threatened teacher redundancies in so many schools.

The order will impose a cut in the living standard of teachers. The Government are presiding over a rate of inflation of 9·4 per cent., and are imposing on teachers a pay increase of 2 per cent. less than that. In other words, in their attempt to deal with the problem of falling morale, the Government are imposing on teachers a further 2 per cent. cut in their living standards. Furthermore, the Government have failed yet again to provide local education authorities with the money to fund the pay increase. Yet again, the Government will force local education authorities to make cuts in education services. Capped authorities will be forced to make cuts and to make teachers redundant. In authorities such as Barnsley and Calderdale the increase in spending is below the rate of inflation, yet the Secretary of State is prepared to take risks with children's education and see teachers made redundant.

The order is inadequate to deal with the problems that are faced by teachers and the education service generally. For that reason, I ask my right hon. and hon. Friends to join me in voting against it.

11.40 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Education and Science (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): The debate should really have been about the interim advisory committee's report, which includes some extremely good suggestions and recommendations about teachers' pay. Much of this has been misrepresented by Opposition Members. The majority of rational people outside this place, having read what has been recommended and what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has said, will say that everything that has been suggested is excellent and that the Government were right to accept it.

It was predictable that we would have much rhetoric from Opposition Members. There has been a great deal of gloom and doom and much talking up of a situation within our schools that does not need to be talked about in that way. It does not need to be discussed time and again. Our reforms are working excellently in the schools and we shall be seeing the results, which will undoubtedly benefit our children.

I am concerned by some of the remarks of the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw). I understand that the Labour party's policy review states that any changes made would be as resources allow. Yet tonight we have heard from the hon. Gentleman that any long-distant Labour Administration would give a completely open-ended commitment to the outcome of any sort of teacher negotiations or whatever mechanism that Government had for settling or negotiating teachers' pay. That does not sit well for the taxpayer in future. Nor does it sit well with remarks that have been made by other members of the Opposition Front Bench.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) made an excellent speech. He rightly supported the IAC's report and rightly said also that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State always includes in his remarks the admiration and gratitude that the Government have for the dedicated teaching force throughout the country. We believe that the work that it is doing to implement our reforms will add enormously to the value of education for our children. I can tell my hon. Friend that my right hon. Friend has been working hard to reduce the amount of paper work.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) referred to the difficulties that are posed by regional variations. The IAC has drawn attention to the matter in its report. There are admirable flexibilities, but I hope that the matter will be further examined in any future negotiations.

It is right to say that the talk about teacher shortages is regional and could become worse. I tell the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) that only this morning the Labour leader of the Association of County Councils told us that there were no teacher shortages in his county of Nottinghamshire. How does that square with the hon. Gentleman's rather sweeping remarks? It is extremely important to get the facts right.

We need less rhetoric and much more support for our teaching force throughout the country. We need more support from all who talk about education in this country. Above all, we need support for the order, so that we can implement the good increases and the changes and flexibility that the interim advisory committee has given us, to ensure that teachers feel rewarded—as I am sure they will.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 264, Noes 183.

Division No.226] **[at 11.44 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen

Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'thfield)*
King, Rt Hon Tom *(Bridgwater)*
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(E Berkshire)*
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Michael
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Malins, Humfrey
Mans, Keith
Maples, John
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Sir Hal
Mills, Iain
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Sir Charles
Morrison, Rt Hon P *(Chester)*
Moss, Malcolm
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Riddick, Graham
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Sainsbury, Hon Tim
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Sir Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thorne, Neil
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, Rt Hon David
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(D'mline E)*
Brown, Nicholas *(Newcastle E)*
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Buckley, George J.
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carr, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Jones, Ieuan *(Ynys Môn)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Leadbitter, Ted
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard

Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Reid, Dr John
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rogers, Allan
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N.
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Mrs Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Martyn Jones.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Education (School Teachers' Pay and Conditions) Order 1990, which was laid before this House on 11th May, be approved.

European Community Documents

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(5) (Standing Committees on European Community documents).

MOTOR VEHICLE EMISSIONS

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 4704/90, relating to motor vehicle emissions; and supports the Government in its efforts to secure an agreement on emissions from motor vehicles, taking into account the environmental benefits, the cost to motorists and the need to set a stable standard for industry.—*[Mr. Fallon.]*

Question agreed to.

Orders of the Day

CALDEY ISLAND BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 90 (Second Reading Committees), That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Question agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Ordered,

That the Bill be committed to a Select Committee of Eight Members, Four to be nominated by the House and Four by the Committee of Selection:

That there shall stand referred to the Select Committee—

(a) any Petition against the Bill presented by being deposited in the Private Bill Office at any time not later than the fourteenth day after this day, and

(b) any Petition which has been presented by being deposited in the Private Bill Office and in which the Petitioners complain of any amendment as proposed in the filled-up Bill or of any matter which has arisen during the progress of the Bill before the said Committee.

being a Petition in which the Petitioners pray to be heard by themselves, their Counsel or Agents:

That if no such Petition as is mentioned in sub-paragraph (a) above is presented, or if all such Petitions are withdrawn before the meeting of the Committee, the order for a committal of the Bill to a Select Committee shall be discharged and the Bill shall be committed to a Standing Committee:

That any Petitioner whose Petition stands referred to the Select Committee shall, subject to the Rules and Orders of the House and to the Prayer of his Petition, be entitled to be heard by himself, his Counsel or Agents upon his Petition provided that it is prepared and signed in conformity with the Rules and Orders of the House, and the Member in charge of the Bill shall be entitled to be heard by his Counsel or Agents in favour of the Bill against that Petition:

That the Committee have power to report from day to day the Minutes of the Evidence taken before them:

That Three be the Quorum of the Committee.—*[Mr. Fallon.]*

MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Ordered,

That Mr. Menzies Campbell be discharged from the Select Committee on Members' Interests and Mr. Andrew Welsh be added to the Committee.—*[Mr Fallon.]*

ESTIMATES

Resolved,

That this House agrees with the Report [22nd May] of the Liaison Committee.—*[Mr. Fallon.]*

PETITION

Alcohol Sales

11.57 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I wish to present a petition on behalf of the Reverend E. M. Scott, minister of the Church of Scotland's St. Andrew's church of Port Glasgow, the session clerks and 309 members or adherents of St. Andrew's. It is a petition which I both support and commend to the House.

The petition is as follows:

The humble petition of members or adherents of St. Andrew's church, Port Glasgow, sheweth that they are seriously disturbed and wish to express their deep concern over the possibility of the introduction of legislation which would permit off-sales premises to open on Sundays, and would, in their opinion, further increase the growing problem of alcohol abuse in country.

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House do note that the under-subscribed persons do hereby protest most vigorously against that section of the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill 1990 which would permit the opening of off-sales premises from 12.30 pm to 10 pm on Sundays, or any other hour or hours on Sundays.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

Brymbo Steelworks

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

11.59 pm

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): I am pleased to have been selected for the Adjournment debate, but I am not pleased about my reason for requesting the debate. We are discussing the proposed closure of the Brymbo steelmaking plant with the loss of nearly 1,200 well-paid jobs in a manufacturing industry. Almost 40 per cent. of the products made at the plant are exported.

Brymbo steelworks has a long history. John Wilkinson built a smelting works on the site in the 18th century. The first blast furnace began production in 1798 and since then steelmaking has continued until now. Only 10 years ago, in 1980, a new finishing mill was built at a cost of £48 million —which was a great deal in those days. Jobs have been lost since 1980 when more than 2,000 people were employed, but production and productivity increased and there are now more than 1,100 employees at the plant.

As a result of the Phoenix II negotiations and their conclusion in 1985, a new company, United Engineering Steels, was formed. That company, which was heavily dominated by plant east of the Pennines and managed by people from that area, controlled nearly all engineering steelmaking throughout the United Kingdom. When the new company was set up it decided to spend nearly all the £60 million of Government money that it received on a concast plant at Aldwarke, and we knew at Brymbo that the writing was on the wall. However, now that the closure is imminent, the awful reality of what will happen around Wrexham and the village of Brymbo is before us.

The area will become a complete wasteland as Brymbo depends on the steelworks. The proposed closure would affect not only those employed at the steelworks, but the bus drivers, the shopkeepers and the tradesmen. The viability of the entire community would be wiped out at a stroke. Well-paid jobs would disappear and no one can pretend that any redevelopment could compensate for them. There would be other jobs, but they would not be well paid.

That would be undesirable but understandable in a mixed market economy if the steelworks were making a loss. It could be said that if a country is to get ahead it needs to adapt and invest in new industry and that the steelworks had to close. Social services and counselling would be provided to assist in redeployment. We would all regret that, but we would recognise that it was necessary because our country can survive only if we make trading profits and increase our manufacturing productivity.

However, that is not the case at Brymbo. The plant has not made a loss in any of the past 20 years and I suspect that it did not make a loss in many of the years before that. Last year it made approximately £5 million in profit. Up to 40 per cent. of its production goes to export. It is one of the most profitable steel plants in the United Kingdom, yet it faces closure.

It is not surprising that the United Kingdom is on the decline, that countries such as France are pulling ahead and that Germany is more powerful than us in economic terms when we continually shoot ourselves in the foot by closing down our profitable, export-leading companies.

Why does United Engineering Steels propose to close the plant? It can only be because UES is taking a close,

selfish view of its position and believes that it is easy to enhance its monopoly east of the Pennines. I do not want to say anything against plants east of the Pennines—they need to survive and make profits, and I wish them well—but they should not be making profits at the expense of plants, such as Brymbo, west of the Pennines.

Is the UES management afraid of competition? It says that Brymbo does not have a long-term future, which is why it needs to be closed. If it does not have such a future, there can be no objection to UES selling the company as a going concern, should a buyer be found. That is a critical issue.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. David Hunt) *indicated assent.*

Dr. Marek: I am glad that the Secretary of State nods, although I hope that I have not embarrassed him by pointing that out.

If the plant has no long-term future, it cannot be a threat to UES. If it has a future, why close it? Brymbo can handle orders as small as 1 tonne. Such orders would not be filled by the plants at Aldwarke or elsewhere east of the Pennines, so there would be a loss of market share for this country.

There is customer loyalty to Brymbo. A number of customers prefer steel made not by the concast methods but by the traditional methods deployed at Brymbo in the manufacture of billets. As Mr. Pennington, the former chief executive of UES and now the board member charged with deciding Brymbo's fate, said, instead of potentially taking capacity out of our United Kingdom plants, we should be seeking new markets in Europe and the world. He believes that the right way forward for UES is to do that and to increase production so that full capacity and full utility can be made of the plants in the Sheffield area.

Mr. Pennington said that the market in engineering steels was not going to decrease. The current wisdom in some economic circles is that there is 10 per cent. overcapacity of engineering steels and that there should be contraction, but Mr Pennington does not believe that. His logic does not add up. Instead of taking away our profitable manufacturing capacity, we should expand, look for markets and sell Brymbo as a going concern or perhaps in a joint venture with some other partner. Closing it is not good for Wrexham, Wales or the United Kingdom. I have no doubt about that.

I am pleased that, because of last weekend's events, Wales is now united in marketing Brymbo worldwide. The local councils and my hon. Friends the Members for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) and for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones) are with me on this issue. I pay tribute to the Secretary of State for sending in the Welsh Development Agency to decide whether Brymbo was viable. The WDA's chairman, Dr. Gwyn Jones, believes that it is. Brymbo is being marketed worldwide to find a potential buyer, and I know that the Secretary of State supports that stance.

We have overcome that hurdle, but there are many more and it would be foolish of me to pretend that I am optimistic about saving the plant. We must find a buyer. I have no expertise in that matter, but I am confident that either Clwyd county council or the WDA, through their contacts and international expertise, will be able to find a buyer. Interest has been shown in taking over the steelworks. After that, there comes the most difficult hurdle: we must persuade UES that it is not against its interests to sell Brymbo as a going concern. On its record, the plant deserves to survive.

If we add to that the advantage of a steel-producing plant and the benefits that that brings to the people of Wales and in particular to the standard of living of people in Wrexham and consider the advantages for the United Kingdom in that 40 per cent. of its products are exported and thereby help our balance of payments, the case for the retention of steelmaking in Brymbo is unanswerable.

I hope that the Secretary of State for Wales agrees with what I have said. I do not want promises from him tonight because no one has unlimited powers and no one can make promises. However, the Secretay of State has considerable power. I hope that he will do his best and use his influence, if a suitable buyer comes forward, to persuade UES to sell the plant at a fair price so that steelmaking at Brymbo can continue.

I would like the Secretary of State's help. However, more importantly the people of Brymbo and of north-east Wales want it in that endeavour.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside) *rose*——

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Do the hon. Members who are rising have the consent of the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) and of the Secretary of State for Wales?

Dr. Marek *indicated assent.*

Mr. David Hunt *indicated assent.*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I call Mr. Barry Jones.

12.11 am

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): I am glad that the Secretary of State for Wales is present for this urgent and extraordinary debate. I support 100 per cent. the vigorous efforts of my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) to assist his beleaguered constituency and the community of Brymbo. I also support 100 per cent. the efforts of the Brymbo steelworkers.

I very much regret that the decision to close the plant was taken by a small board far from the seat of production at Brymbo. That cannot be right and I deeply regret the decision of the UES board. The 1,125 workers, their families and the community face an uncertain future. Those 1,125 jobs are highly skilled and well paid. Most importantly for Wales, they are manufacturing jobs. As my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham said, the jobs are important to Brymbo, to Wales and to Britain and its industrial future. If those jobs are lost, they will not be recreated in Wales. They cannot be reclaimed. Those jobs are vital to the industrial future of Wales.

The board's decision is unacceptable. It represents deskilling and deindustrialisation at a time when we need more skills and more wealth-creating manufacturing industry. Our nation sees its manufacturing capability bleeding away. Brymbo would add to the disaster that we will face if there is any more erosion of our industrial base.

The social impact will be severe. I am concerned about Brymbo, but I am also concerned about Llanfynydd, Ffrith, Cy Mau, Caergwrle, Llay, Hope, Penyffrid, Cefn-y-bedd and Abermorddu in my constituency. Those are small communities, but they all send workers to

[Mr. Barry Jones]

Brymbo. The work force earns its daily bread at the plant. It is productive and it creates profit. It has been very loyal to the company and to the industry over many years. The proposed closure is a wretched and unwelcome reward for a fine steelmaking capability.

I congratulate the steelworkers' leaders, Mr. Griffiths, Mr. Jones and Mr. Bostock. The help of the Wrexham Maelor council has been superb. Again I praise the vigorous efforts of my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham.

I blame the Prime Minister and the former Chancellor of the Exchequer. Their economic policies were so wrong that they have led to high interest rates which have destroyed domestic and commercial budgets. Her Majesty's Government bear a heavy responsibility.

The proposed closure will mean more imports of the product that Brymbo will cease to make. That will happen as the years roll by. Also, there will be a steel desert in the north-west and in north Wales. I refer to the former production centres of Workington, Mostyn, Warrington, Manchester, Irlam, Shotton, and, as proposed, Brymbo. That cannot be good for north Wales and it cannot be good for Britain. I am one with my hon. Friend in seeking to stay this execution.

I note from the House of Commons Library that steel strip imports have increased by about 67 per cent. since 1983. In that same period there has been a 103 per cent. increase in stainless steel and alloy imports. I warn that if the jobs go to the wall, there will be more and more imports. One of Britain's greatest problems is a terrifying balance of payments deficit.

The decision by a board that is far away from Brymbo will add to the difficulties of our nation.

I should like the Secretary of State to visit Brymbo. Indeed, I should like him to set up and chair a meeting of his agency, the company, the unions and the local authorities. I should like him to do that urgently, with the objectives of subjecting the company to the severest questioning and enabling the trade unions and councillors to talk to and question the company. Above all else, I ask him to redouble his efforts and, even at this late hour, to use the considerable powers in his armoury to help the people of Brymbo. If he does that, we shall support him.

12.16 am

Mr. Martyn Jones (Clwyd, South-West): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek), who has been fighting all along for the jobs in Brymbo, for allowing me a few minutes of his valuable Adjournment debate to make some points about the wider implications of this matter for the people of north Wales.

Many people work in the plants and bring money into my constituency and into that of my hon. Friend and many other hon. Members in north Wales. There are 1,100 well-paid jobs involved, and they are well-paid because the plant is profitable. However, it is being closed when it is profitable. As my hon. Friend said, closing an unprofitable plant is bad enough—it is unpleasant—but closing a profitable plant is obscene. It is the reality of free market Thatcherism taken to a ridiculous extent.

I remind the Secretary of State of an article that appeared in the *Daily Post*, which states:

> "On the eve of his first official visit to North Wales, Mr. Hunt said: 'As Secretary of State for Wales my commitment is to all parts of Wales in seeking to spread prosperity everywhere.'
>
> He intends to spend at least one day each week in North Wales."

I am not sure whether he has done that; I hope so. The Secretary of State is further quoted as saying:

> "Over the coming weeks and months I shall be taking every opportunity to listen and to learn . . . I want to develop the most positive possible partnership with the Welsh people."

Dr. Kim Howells: Does my hon. Friend agree that the refusal of the owners of Brymbo to allow some formula to emerge—a sell-off, for example—is reflected in many other parts of Welsh industry? For example, in the coal industry, British Coal has refused to contemplate the sale of mines that it proposes to close to companies that had made offers to buy those mines. What is happening——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member must restrict his remarks to the matter before the House.

Dr. Howells: I fear that what is happening in the steel industry at Brymbo, for example, is another case of the way in which decisions that are made elsewhere are marginalising the Welsh economy. Unless we sort this one out—I hope that the Secretary of State will address this matter—the problem will become more urgent and more prevalent——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hope that the Secretary of State will address the matter that we are considering.

Mr. Jones: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) for that intervention because, although he strayed a little from the subject, what he described is happening all the time. In fact, it is happening to a factory in my constituency. The James Seddon factory is being closed because of decisions made elsewhere, although it is profitable. My hon. Friend has made a valid point.

I remind the Secretary of State that he is reported as saying that he intends

> "to ensure that North Wales does not lose out in the Government's drive to lure more job boosting ventures to Wales . . . Two hundred and ninety five important inward investment projects have come to Wales since the last election and there are many more in the pipeline."

The article also reported that the right hon. Gentleman is

> "to lead a new effort to boost investment from Japan, Korea and France."

That was reported on 14 May, the very day of the Brymbo announcement. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will take what has been said to heart and that he will not rue his words. If he does not keep Brymbo open, those words will come back to haunt him. I hope that they do not have to.

12.20 am

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. David Hunt): The importance of Brymbo is demonstrated by the presence in the Chamber tonight of the Minister of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Conwy (Mr. Roberts); my Parliamentary Private Secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis); and myself. I am also

pleased to note the presence of the shadow Secretary of State for Wales, the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones). Brymbo's importance is further demonstrated by the presence of my hon. Friends the Members for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) and for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman), and by my many other hon. Friends who have stated their strong support for the community in Brymbo. I note also the presence of the hon. Members for Wrexham (Dr. Marek), to whom I shall return in a moment, for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones), and for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells), who have both spoken, and for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Livsey). Their presence demonstrates not only the importance of Brymbo but the fact that the issues that we are considering transcend any party political differences that we may have. I very much appreciate the spirit of the way in which all those who are involved in this difficult matter are working together to do their best to ensure a secure future for those employed at Brymbo.

The hon. Member for Wrexham, with the local authorities, the communities and the steelworkers, has taken a positive lead in this. Together with the Welsh Development Agency and United Engineering Steels Ltd., they have all shown a willingness to co-operate which I very much welcome. That applies to all the political parties in the area, including the local Conservative party, led by Owen Patterson and John Myers. All the parties and all parts of the community have come together under the leadership of those involved on behalf of their community.

The hon. Member for Wrexham has already given the House some of the history of Brymbo and has mentioned how United Engineering Steels Ltd. was formed in April 1986 as a company jointly owned by the British Steel Corporation and Guest Keen Nettlefolds. This joint venture, code-named Phoenix II, was launched at a time of severe over-capacity in the United Kingdom engineering steels sector. It was intended that Phoenix II would maximise the level of investment available and enable the company to match international competition. This project involved the Government providing £55 million in funds to BSC to subscribe in preference shares and loan stock in UES on the understanding that UES would undertake further investment. There were no conditions attached to the Government's funding in relation to the location of the investment.

As hon. Members will know, the decision was made in June 1986 by the UES board to invest £60 million in a continuous bloom caster at the Aldewarke plant near Rotherham. I know that great disappointment was felt at the time—which I shared, as a north Waleian—that Brymbo did not receive this investment. However, UES stated that it had no plans to close any of its major works during the following two years. Thereafter, the future of all plants, including the steelworks at Brymbo, was said to depend on market opportunity. Over the ensuing four years, conditions in the steel industry have remained extremely competitive.

Following the announcement by UES on the proposed closure of the Brymbo plant on 14 May, I arranged immediately to meet a delegation led by the hon. Member for Wrexham—I could speak to him that day because I was opening a factory and a new mill in the area— and company representatives. Those meetings took place on 16 May. I listened with great care to the points made by the hon. Gentleman, the local authority, the trade union and community representatives. They stressed, as the hon. Gentleman has tonight, that the steelworks was profitable and that the work force was loyal and skilful. It had co-operated fully in the management's efforts to improve productivity over the past few years.

I subsequently met, in the afternoon, the company directors who explained their reasons for announcing the intended closure. A number of reasons for their decision were given, including the scope for increased use of capacity at their other plants. They said that significant expenditure would be required at Brymbo to bring it up to standards achieved elsewhere in the group and that this expenditure would add considerably to the costs of continuing to manufacture at Brymbo. To utilise fully what they described as the more modern process routes of other UES plants within the group, the company had reluctantly concluded that Brymbo should be closed. Nevertheless, I took the opportunity to convey to the company the points made forcefully to me earlier by the local representatives.

Following those two meetings, I am pleased to say that it was agreed that the company would hold urgent discussions with the Welsh Development Agency about all the options for the future of the steelworks. I immediately contacted by telephone the chairman of the WDA, Dr. Gwyn Jones, who made arrangements to visit the Brymbo works. He held detailed talks with the company as part of his agency's examination of the plant's viability. Although ultimate decisions about the Brymbo works are a matter for the commercial judgment of its owners, a number of options have already been identified.

Clearly, the ideal solution for the area would be to ensure continuing steelmaking at Brymbo and I have asked the WDA to concentrate on finding such a solution, covering the examination of joint venture operations. Naturally, in addition, the WDA is looking into possible alternatives which include securing employment at the site, first, by attracting an allied industry to the works to use all or part of the plant complex; secondly, by converting the buildings for alternative uses, such as heavy engineering or steel fabrication; and, thirdly, by redeveloping the site totally. Dr. Jones is keeping in close touch with me on all those issues.

Hon. Members may have read press reports saying that various companies have shown an interest in Brymbo for one of the uses mentioned earlier. The House will, of course, appreciate that discussions are at an early stage and it would be unfair of me to raise Members' hopes without foundation by giving details of any negotiations which may eventually prove fruitless. I would, however, like to thank the WDA for its prompt response. It has circulated worldwide the details of the facilities at Brymbo and the opporunties available to all interested companies and to all major banks throughout the world for them to convey to their clients.

The hon. Member for Wrexham asked about grant aid paid to the company. I should be happy to explain the position to him. The last of the four-year conditions on assets at the works will have expired in September 1989. Therefore, there are no continuing conditions. I have little time left to deal with his remaining points.

The WDA intends to be as positive and constructive as possible. I recognise that manufacturing employment in the Wrexham travel-to-work area at 16,600 is some 22 per cent. higher than it was in 1983. In overall terms, Wrexham and the Deeside area is one of the strongest growth areas

[Mr. David Hunt]

in the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, our commitment to north Wales through the vast sums being spent on the A55 includes our commitment to Brymbo.

Let me make it absolutely clear that, whatever the result of all the work now being undertaken, both sides of the House are determined to secure the future of the Brymbo community. Both Brymbo and its surrounding area have seen a dramatic fall in unemployment in recent years, but that in no way lessens our resolve to help the steel community.

I hope that the House will understand that I can say little about the detailed commercial discussions that are taking place, but I assure hon. Members that no opportunity will be left unexplored in our search for a satisfactory solution.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 7 June 1990

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL (No. 2) BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question proposed [26 February],

That the Bill be now considered.

Debate further adjourned till Thursday 14 June.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (No. 2) BILL *(By Order)*

MEDWAY TUNNEL BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Orders for consideration, as amended, read.

To be considered on Thursday 14 June.

Mr. Speaker: As all the private Bills set down for Second Reading have blocking motions, with the leave of the House I shall put them as a single group.

CATTEWATER RECLAMATION BILL *(By Order)*

SHARD BRIDGE BILL *(By Order)*

VALE OF GLAMORGAN (BARRY HARBOUR) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

LONDON UNDERGROUND BILL *(By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Thursday 14 June.

EXMOUTH DOCKS BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question proposed [29 March],

That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Debate further adjourned till Thursday 14 June.

GREAT YARMOUTH PORT AUTHORITY BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

HEATHROW EXPRESS RAILWAY BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Thursday 14 June.

LONDON REGIONAL TRANSPORT (PENALTY FARES) BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Questions proposed [10 May],

That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Debate further adjourned till Thursday 14 June.

SOUTHAMPTON RAPID TRANSIT BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

PORT OF TYNE BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Thursday 14 June.

Oral Answers to Questions

NATIONAL FINANCE

Personal Equity Plans

1. **Mr. French:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on his proposals to change PEPs.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Peter Lilley): The improvements in PEPs, which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor announced in his Budget statement, have been widely welcomed.

Mr. French: Does my hon. Friend agree that some of the financial institutions that at one time had deep reservations about the effectiveness of PEPs now welcome them as a most essential, important and attractive component of the savings market? Does he foresee, in respect of either PEPs or TESSAs, the possibility of a similar conversion on the part of the Labour party?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right that the institutions have put their whole weight behind PEPs, and that is why they are now doing extremely well. I am afraid that confused messages are coming from the Opposition about such matters. Some Opposition Members say that they are in favour and some say that they are against. I do not foresee any conversion and certainly there is no uniformity of view among the Opposition.

Sir William Clark: Does my hon. Friend agree that the encouragement to small savers since the Government came to office has meant that they have increased in number from 2·75 million to 11 million today?

Mr. Lilley: I am not sure how my hon. Friend defines small savers, but he is perfectly correct that there has been a big increase in their number. As regards personal equity plans, in the first quarter of this year the number of new plans issued was a quarter higher than in the whole of 1988. That is excellent news.

Income Tax

2. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by how much the basic rate of income tax has been reduced since 1979; and what are his future plans for the rates of income tax.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. John Major): The basic rate of income tax has been reduced from 33 per cent. in 1979 to 25 per cent. in 1990. Moreover, the borrowing requirement, which was a deferred tax liability, has given way in the past three years to a Budget surplus. It is our objective to reduce the basic rate of tax to 20p in the pound, but only as soon as it is prudent and sensible to do so.

Mr. Riddick: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that every time the Government have reduced the basic rate of income tax, the Labour Opposition and the Liberal Democrats have bitterly opposed the reduction? Is not it the case that had Labour still been in power we would still have a basic rate of 33p in the pound? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, were he to adopt the policies and

commitments in the Labour party's policy review document, the basic rate of income tax would have to be massively increased for everyone? Has not the Labour party always been the high-tax party and will not it always be?

Mr. Major: My hon. Friend makes his point entirely clearly. I am not sure that is wholly true to say that the Liberal Democrats have invariably opposed the tax decreases. I think that there was an occasion when they chose not to do so. My hon. Friend is being generous when he suggests that if a Labour Government were in power at the moment we should have a tax rate of 33p in the pound. It might well be noticeably higher. When, in due course, we get round to the detailed costing that Phillips and Drew has already attempted, we may be able to illustrate that it would be higher.

Mr. Beith: Will the Chancellor explain what he meant when he said that it was not prudent to achieve his objective of an income tax rate of 20p in the pound this year? Is he admitting that he is using the level of income tax as a tool of economic and fiscal management? Will not all Governments have to do that?

Mr. Major: The answer to the hon. Gentleman is that of course I am, as we have done and as I shall continue to do.

Mr. Arbuthnot: Is not it right that the Government have greatly increased personal allowances, so taking out of tax many people at the bottom of the income scale? Does not that give the lie to Opposition parties, which suggest that they are the only people who care about those on lower incomes?

Mr. Major: That is entirely true. By almost any measure—there are a variety that one can use—there has been a considerable increase in personal allowances at the bottom end of the tax scale. That is desirable. It is a deliberate act of policy and, of course, it has kept many people out of tax who otherwise would have been in the tax net.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: This question seems to have been tabled as a direct attack on the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and I hope that the Chancellor will repudiate it. He will recall the Chief Secretary saying on BBC's "On the Record" on 13 May that the prospect of tax cuts at the moment does not look very good, that these things are always uncertain, but there is very little room for manoeuvre. Will the Chancellor explain to the House why, after 10 years of Conservative Government—a Government who have declared that a further reduction in income tax is their main objective—there is now very little room for manoeuvre? Will he confirm to the House that it is highly unlikely that there ever will be enough room for manoeuvre to enable 24 out of 25 taxpayers to pay income tax at a basic rate of 20p in the pound?

Mr. Major: Whatever else may happen in this Session of Parliament, the hon. Gentleman just won the palm for brass-necked cheek in his comments of the past few moments. There is no dislocation whatever between the comments of my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary and those that I made at the Dispatch Box a few moments ago. One significant difference that is reflected in what the hon. Gentleman chooses to call the tax burden is that this Government tax honestly for their expenditure and do not tax for some, borrow for the rest and leave later generations to repay. When the borrowing requirement of the hon. Gentleman's party is taken into account, the tax burden in 1979 was sharply higher than it is today.

Mr. Irvine: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Government have shown in the past that reductions in income tax stimulate economic growth and lead to an increase in overall revenue? Will my right hon. Friend take that very much into account when making his tax plans for the future?

Mr. Major: I can assure my hon. Friend that it is ever close to my mind that that virtuous relationship exists. As he may know, the top 5 per cent. of taxpayers will pay 30½ per cent. of total income tax this year compared with 24 per cent. in 1978-79 when the top rate of tax could have been as high as 98 per cent.

European Monetary System

3. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on progress on the Madrid conditions for joining the exchange rate mechanism.

8. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which of the Madrid conditions concerning the United Kingdom entry into the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system have yet to be fulfilled.

17. **Mr. Bell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects that the conditions for the pound sterling's participation in the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system will be fulfilled.

Mr. Major: A good deal of progress has been made in a number of conditions for membership of the exchange rate mechanism, but they have not yet all been met.

Dr. Moonie: Will the Chancellor tell us which condition is likely to be satisfied first: a satisfactory reduction in our underlying rate of inflation or the achievement of a level playing field through the abandonment of subsidies by our European competitors?

Mr. Major: Significant progress has been made in recent months on a number of the external elements that we require before joining the exchange rate mechanism. We have made our position on domestic inflation perfectly clear and I stand by that.

Mr. Wallace: At a recent press conference the Chancellor seemed to suggest that our underlying rate of inflation was much closer to Community averages than a proper statistical approach would reveal. Was he using that figure to try to persuade the Prime Minister that we really should be joining the exchange rate mechanism, and on those grounds should Opposition Members keep quiet about the statistical flaws in his figures?

Mr. Major: It is always a distinct help to the Government if Opposition Members keep quiet, whichever part of the Opposition they may represent. In the remarks to which the hon. Gentleman referred, I was drawing attention to the fact that the British rate of inflation appears misleadingly unreasonable compared with those of our European partners simply because we contain within our inflation rate that which other countries

do not, and it was in response to a question about that matter that I made the remarks to which the hon. Gentleman refers.

Mr. Bell: When we enter the exchange rate mechanism, as the Chancellor of the Exchequer proposes to do in the summer, will he go in on the tight band of 2¼ per cent. or on the broader band of 6 per cent? Will he share his views on that with the House?

Mr. Major: I can neither confirm the date that the hon. Gentleman surreptitiously slipped into his question as an assumption, nor enlighten him on his substantive point.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Will my right hon. Friend assure us that, regardless of the specific matters spelt out in the Madrid conditions, he will not contemplate the entry of sterling into the exchange rate mechanism until he regards it as fully compatible with the needs of domestic monetary policy and, in particular, that he will not do so at any time when it might mean that interest rates would have to be lowered more or more quickly than is necessary for the proper control of monetary conditions and the reduction of inflation?

Mr. Major: I am acutely conscious of the point to which my right hon. Friend rightly draws attention. The aim of joining the exchange rate mechanism is to support the policy to reduce inflation, not to damage it, and from that, my right hon. Friend will be aware of our policy.

Mr. Budgen: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that entry into the exchange rate mechanism is stage one of the Delors proposals? The Delors proposals are supported by all the Commission's bureaucrats and by all the nation states of Europe, with the exception of ourselves. Paragraph 39 asserts that entry into the first stage shall be taken as acceptance of all subsequent stages.

Mr. Major: My hon. Friend has made assertions about what the purpose of stage one might be and about the extent to which that falls within the Delors plan. The fact that the proposal is supported by what he calls the bureaucrats in Brussels does not in itself make it wrong. We have a series of sound economic reasons for joining the exchange rate mechanism. The Government set out the policy that they would join the exchange rate mechanism when certain conditions were met. That remains the policy and it will be in the interests of this country.

Mr. Tim Smith: Now that United Kingdom membership of the exchange rate mechanism has become the fig leaf behind which the Labour party has chosen to hide the private and unpleasant parts of its economic policy, would not we be better advised to join sooner rather than later so that those inadequacies can be exposed to the public for all to see?

Mr. Major: If, as my hon. Friend suggests, the exchange rate mechanism will hide the shortcomings of Labour policies, it will need to be a good deal larger than a fig leaf. It is perfectly clear that the conditions that the Labour party has set out under which it would join the exchange rate mechanism make that pledge——

Mr. Skinner: Not all of us in the Labour party.

Mr. Major: The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) is correct. The conditions set out by the Labour Front Bench, without the support of the Labour Back Benches, for joining the exchange rate mechanism are essentially bogus, for the conditions mean that the Labour Front Bench could not enter.

Mr. John Smith: In the context of possible entry into the exchange rate mechanism, will the Chancellor tell us whether the sufficiency of any reduction in inflation will be assessed according to the retail prices index or according to the so-called "underlying" rate of inflation? May I have a direct answer, please?

Mr. Major: The direct answer, as I have often said, is that the rate of inflation will be assessed on the proximate rate of inflation, which means——

Mr. John Smith: The retail prices index or the underlying rate?

Mr. Major: I am coming precisely to the point. The rate of inflation will be assessed not on the RPI, but on a comparative basis to the measure in which European nations themselves assess inflation. I have repeatedly made that point clear for a long time.

Mr. Nelson: Does my right hon. Friend recall that when there were recent rumours that this country was about to become a full member of the exchange rate mechanism, the immediate effect was that the stock market rose, the exchange value of sterling became firmer and money market interest rates fell? In view of that positive response, which should have warmed my right hon. Friend's heart towards the idea of joining the exchange rate mechanism immediately, will he bear it in mind that if he felt it necessary to take an executive decision, even while the Prime Minister is abroad, to embark on that, he would earn the recognition of a grateful nation?

Mr. Major: I have had some attractive offers in my time. I am not entirely sure to what extent my hon. Friend's offer ranks among them.

I have made it entirely clear to the House now and on previous occasions that I have reached the judgment that, when the conditions that we have set out are met, it will be right for us to join the exchange rate mechanism. We must be aware of the point to which my right hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Stewart), drew attention some time ago, that the balance of advantage in due course is clearly to enter the exchange rate mechanism, and in due course that is what we shall do.

European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

4. **Mr. John P. Smith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what position was taken by the United Kingdom Government in discussions on the European bank for reconstruction and development, in relation to the environmental consequences of any development undertaken.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Richard Ryder): The United Kingdom, like all other potential members of the European bank for reconstruction and development, supports the promotion of economically sound and environmentally sustainable development in the full range of its activities.

Mr. Smith: The Chancellor and the Economic Secretary to the Treasury will be aware that Mr. Nicholas Brady from the United States Treasury and other European

Finance Ministers have taken the lead in calling for environmental objectives to be built into the role of the development bank. May we assume from the Minister's answer that the British Government will support them enthusiastically? Does he agree that there is a big difference between a lot of talk on green issues and practical proposals such as this, which will clean up eastern Europe?

Mr. Ryder: That is already taken care of in article 2 of the EBRD's constitution.

Mr. Adley: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is not only the recipients of the bank's funds who need to co-ordinate the environmental input into their investment decisions but the industrialised countries of western Europe, which, of course, are the providers of the funds? Is my hon. Friend aware, for example, that the Department of Transport seems to have no accurate comparisons between the environmental input allocated by, say, West Germany or France, as opposed to the environmental input in this country, on transport investment decisions? Would he be so kind as to conduct research within the Finance Ministries of the EEC to see what is actually going on as to the allocation of environmental input in public sector investment decisions?

Mr. Ryder: In so far as that question affects the EBRD, I shall of course ensure that Mr. Attali, when he gets down to his job in London shortly, is made aware of the points that my hon. Friend raises.

Mr. Chris Smith: The Economic Secretary will be aware that article 2 of the bank's constitution contains a general provision

"to promote in the full range of its activities environmentally sound and sustainable development."

He will also be aware that that provision is due to the leadership and insistence of the United States, not that of the British Government. What practical steps, rather than words, do the British Government intend to take to ensure that that objective is carried out?

Mr. Ryder: If the hon. Gentleman is not satisfied with article 2 of the EBRD's constitution, he should be aware that the EBRD must report annually on the environmental implications of all its policies.

Taxes

5. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many taxes have been abolished since 1979.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Norman Lamont): Five: the investment income surcharge, the national insurance surcharge, development land tax, tax on lifetime gifts and capital duty. Moreover, in his 1990 Budget, my right hon. Friend announced the abolition of stamp duty on share transactions from late 1991-92 and the abolition of composite rate tax.

Mr. Hague: Does my right hon. Friend accept that that fine achievement is still incomplete? Will he undertake to abolish in the next Parliament as many as possible of the taxes remaining in this Parliament? I suggest for early inclusion stamp duty on house purchase and inheritance tax.

Mr. Lamont: It remains the Government's objective to find taxes that can be abolished and certainly to simplify the tax system. My hon. Friend might also have noticed that, whereas we have abolished five taxes, in its policy document the Labour party proposes the addition of five brand new taxes.

Mr. Ashton: Is not there one tax that the Government have brought in which should be abolished—the poll tax? Is not it a fact that, for every tax that he has abolished, the Chancellor has abolished many benefits, many jobs and all the other things that go with public expenditure that Labour supported?

Mr. Lamont: The hon. Gentleman should recognise that we have dramatically cut the burden of income tax and that that has gone alongside a considerable improvement in living standards, which have increased dramatically during the past decade.

Mr. John Townend: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his excellent record, but is he aware of the disappointment among my hon. Friends that he has not been able to abolish inheritance tax, especially for small businesses? In view of the tremendous contribution that small businesses make to the economy in general, and to employment in particular, if my right hon. Friend cannot abolish inheritance tax, will he at least ease its quite unjustified burden?

Mr. Lamont: I note what my hon. Friend says, but I am sure that he will acknowledge that we have dramatically reformed the punitive rates of taxation on businesses in capital transfer tax and that we have greatly increased the reliefs for businesses, which make it much easier for small businesses to be transferred from one generation to another. That has been recognised by the small business lobby, but I note what my hon. Friend has said.

Mrs. Beckett: In pursuit of the objective of honest taxation, which was identified by the Chancellor a few moments ago, will the Chief Secretary now give us the other side of the balance sheet and list the taxes that have been increased under this Government, starting with VAT and national insurance contributions, and finishing with the poll tax?

Mr. Lamont: As I have already pointed out in reply to the main question, although indirect taxes have been increased, they are taken into account when measuring real standards of living—and real standards of living have dramatically increased on a per annum basis far more than ever happened when the Labour party was in power.

Mr. Devlin: Is my right hon. Friend aware that one of the greatest benefits to the regional economies has been abolition of the taxation and bureaucratic burdens that lay upon them? Will he speculate on the damaging effects of a payroll tax and a regional assembly with taxation powers of its own, as proposed by the Labour party?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The Labour party is proposing new tax-raising powers for an elected Scottish Assembly. It has also advanced the idea of a training levy, which would be yet another new tax on jobs. We know that when it was in power the Labour party imposed taxes on jobs and destroyed jobs through the tax system.

Invisibles

6. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what he forecast for the surplus on invisibles in 1990 in the 1989 autumn statement; and what is his latest forecast.

Mr. Norman Lamont: A total of £6 billion and £1½ billion.

Mr. Lloyd: The Chief Secretary will understand my scepticism about his forecasts, given the Government's bad historic record of forecasting the balance of payments. Does the right hon. Gentleman recall that when Opposition Members have complained about the deficit on manufactures, his Government have frequently told us that we should not worry about that because everything would be made up by the invisibles? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that it was a mistake so to damage the manufacturing sector that it is incapable of performing in the way that the nation needs? What does he intend to do to ensure that global shortfall in the balance of payments is made up?

Mr. Lamont: On the hon. Gentleman's first point about forecasts, the Government's forecasts on the current account do not differ substantially from those of the vast majority of outside forecasters. Indeed, the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) described the forecasts of the Government of which he was a Member as being rather like long-range weather forecasts—better than nothing. We have a higher opinion of our forecasts than that.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to the deterioration on the invisibles account. That is due to a number of factors to which I referred at our previous Question Time, including the timing of EC payments. That is why, despite what happened in the last quarter of last year, we are expecting the position to improve according to the forecasts that I have given to the House.

Mr. Quentin Davies: Will my right hon. Friend give some thought in future to whether, when publishing the invisibles figures, a clearer distinction might be made between interest and dividends received, intergovernmental payments, and the sale of services to non-residents—all of which are conceptually different elements in the national income account, and distinguishing between them might avoid some of the confusion that has given rise to some of the questions this afternoon?

Mr. Lamont: I shall certainly look into the point that my hon. Friend has raised. Several points have been made about the compilation of the invisibles account, including, for example, the fact that appreciation of our overseas assets does not score, although it might be argued that it should count against interest payments and dividends.

Dr. Marek: The Chief Secretary might be squirming, after 10 years, that his Government have achieved the record that the tax burden has increased sharply since 1979. The total tax burden is much higher now.

Mr. Major: No.

Dr. Marek: Yes, it is, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer knows it. He also knows that the balance of payment on our visibles is much lower now than it was in 1979. He has achieved the unique record after 10 years of his Administration that he managed to wipe out the balance of payments on our invisibles in the last quarter of the last year. Instead of simply telling the House that he expects this shameful state of affairs to improve, will he tell the House precisely why he expects it to do so?

Mr. Lamont: I explained carefully to the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) why we expected an improvement in invisibles. We also expect an improvement on the current account because we expect the economy to slow down as a result of the measures that we have already taken. We have repeated that on many occasions.

Charitable Giving

Mr. Gerald Bowden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated cost to the Exchequer of his proposals to assist charitable giving.

Mr. Lilley: The cost will depend on take-up, but may rise to about £15 million.

Mr. Bowden: Will my hon. Friend confirm that charitable giving has doubled in the past 10 years and say how much the cost of tax relief has increased over that period?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is right that the amount of charitable giving in Britain has more than doubled in real terms during the past decade. Tax relief has risen in real terms by 120 per cent. and has been a major stimulus in that welcome increase.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is it true that the Adam Smith Institute, a right-wing think tank and the keeper of the sacred flame of Thatcherism, benefits under the legislation governing charities? Is it fair that it can call itself a charity? Is not that an abuse of charity law and should not the law be changed?

Mr. Lilley: I can neither confirm nor deny the hon. Gentleman's point. Of course, he could look it up in the public records. However, I have been lobbied in the past on behalf of the Fabian Society for alleviation of inheritance tax. Apparently it receives a large proportion of its moneys from inheritances from deceased members.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: What does my hon. Friend think would be the effect on charitable giving if the 171 promises for increased spending in "Meet the Challenge, Make the Change" were implemented, estimated by Phillips and Drew at £19·5 billion?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend makes a good point. Undoubtedly, the increase in charitable giving was due not only to the physical incentives that we gave but to the fact that people have more money in their pockets because taxes are lower. They are able and willing to give more. If that were not the case charitable giving would decrease, as it would under the heavy and increased burden of tax which the Labour party would impose.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Although I welcome the increase in charitable giving, does the Minister agree that many charities are disappointed that more citizens and taxpayers have not used the give-as-you-earn scheme?

Mr. Lilley: I confirm that there is considerable scope for improvement in the use of the scheme that we have introduced. However, last year the number of donors

through the payroll giving scheme increased by 50 per cent. and the amounts given increased by 100 per cent. I pay tribute to the level of giving of all kinds in the hon. Gentleman's Province. Although the Province has the lowest income, it has the highest level of giving per head and is an example to the rest of the United Kingdom.

Mr. John Smith: Why is not inheritance tax paid in respect of donations to political parties? What justification can there be for that?

Mr. Lilley: Because the decision was taken, alongside other changes in inheritance tax, by the Committee that considered the Finance Bill last year, without a great deal of dissent.

Investment Growth (EC)

9. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total investment growth in the 1980s across European Community countries.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Since 1980 growth of total investment has averaged 2·1 per cent. a year across EC countries.

Mr. Thompson: Do not those figures confirm that Britain and our European partners are preparing well for 1992? Does not that provide a sound basis for future export performance? Will my right hon. Friend join me in welcoming the confidence recently shown by business men in Norwich about future export performance?

Mr. Lamont: I agree with my hon. Friend. Our investment performance compares well with that of other countries. The average for the European Community is 2·1 per cent., whereas total investment in this country between 1980 and 1989 has gone up by an average of about 4½ per cent. a year. That is an extremely impressive record.

Mr. Alan Williams: Is not the Minister rather easily impressed? He should look at the answer given to me by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on Tuesday in which he suggested that had we achieved a rate of increase in manufacturing investment during the lifetime of the Government comparable to that achieved by France and West Germany we would have had £18 billion more investment and, according to the Chancellor's figures given in that answer, had we achieved the rate attained under the previous Labour Government, we would have had an extra £30,000 million of manufacturing investment. Does not that explain why we are unprepared for 1992?

Mr. Lamont: Opposition Members do not like it when we give some of the good facts about the British economy. That is why the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) chose to make a press announcement this morning to celebrate the opening of the World Cup by saying that British economic performance compares badly with that of Italy. During the 1980s, however, we have grown faster than Italy; our investment and manufacturing output has been better and our unemployment rate is lower. Our rate of inflation, based on a comparable measure, is also lower. I fear that the hon. Lady has scored an own goal, and it is a pity. Like Bobby Robson, she ought to play for England.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the figures are encouraging even if they do not meet the needs of the Opposition? Does he also agree, however, that one of the most important things that we must do is to encourage manufacturing industry to invest in new plant and machinery? When we come to consider new concessions they should be given to manufacturing industry, not to private individuals through individual taxation.

Mr. Lamont: I note my hon. Friend's suggestion; perhaps he is making an early Budget representation. He will also have noticed that in the past couple of years manufacturing investment has grown strongly. I am sure that my hon. Friend, with his concern for manufacturing industry in his constituency, will have welcomed that strong growth.

Mortgages

10. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on the percentage of total mortgage holders who pay interest on an annualised basis.

Mr. Ryder: More than 40 per cent. of building society borrowers are members of annual review schemes. No precise information is available on banks and other mortgage lenders.

Mr. Watson: Will the Secretary of State assure those millions of people, of whom I am one, who have their mortgage payments adjusted annually in the spring, that the next time they are adjusted they can look forward to a reduction in payments?

Mr. Ryder: Interest rates will remain as high as necessary for as long as necessary to bear down on inflation. Once inflation has been conquered in that way, interest rates might come down.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is hypocritical for Opposition Members to talk about the impact of interest rates on mortgages when they opposed the right to buy and when their roof tax would bankrupt many householders?

Mr. Ryder: My hon. Friend is right. The Labour party is growing increasingly unsure of itself as those sorts of charges are made.

Mr. Boateng: When the Economic Secretary attacked yesterday inaccurate and misleading advertising of mortgages, was he referring to either or both of the following, beginning respectively:

"John Major might take a year to cut"—

[Interruption.]

Mr. Speaker: Order. We paraphrase at Question Time.

Mr. Boateng: Was he referring to either or both advertisements that suggest that the Chancellor might cut mortgage rates or that the surest way in which to ensure that mortgage rates come down is to bring about a general election in which case there would be nothing to pay? When he was referring to misleading mortgage advertisements—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member is in order. He is not quoting now.

Mr. Boateng: When the Minister was referring to misleading mortgage advertisements, did he have in mind

perhaps the biggest-ever misadvertisement for mortgages—that there was any prospect of interest rates coming down in the immediate future and some relief being given to people who are suffering the enormous mortgage misery that affects so many home owners and home buyers in Britain?

Mr. Ryder: That was a poor advertisement for a sound bite. The answer to the hon. Gentleman's question is no.

Business Investment

11. **Mr. Cran:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by what amount total business investment has increased in real terms over the past three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Lamont: Business investment grew by over 40 per cent. in real terms in the three years to 1989, the largest increase over a three-year period since the war.

Mr. Cran: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the most encouraging aspect of the investment scene is the amount of investment being made in this country by foreign companies, illustrated this week by the Invest in Britain Bureau, which announced that up to 15 March this year, 233 investments had been made in Britain? It was illustrated also by the fact that 40 per cent. of all Japanese investment in the European Community came to this country, 9 per cent. went to West Germany and only 6 per cent. went to France, proving that other countries know the fundamental strength of the United Kingdom economy.

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend makes a good point. This country does well, compared with its competitors, in the receipt of Japanese and American investment. That investment has been into certain key sectors, and there have been particularly important investments in the motor industry. I entirely agree with my hon. Friend.

Mr. Madden: Will the Chief Secretary mount an urgent investigation into the latest small business to be registered in Britain, National Front Printers Ltd? Will he ensure that that company, which seems to have come into being aided and abetted by officials and possibly Ministers at the Department of Trade and Industry, does not enjoy any tax reliefs or other benefits from the Treasury?

Mr. Lamont: That does not arise out of this question.

Mrs. Peacock: Is my right hon. Friend aware that much of that massive business investment has been in manufacturing industries in Yorkshire, and particularly in my constituency, and that it has contributed to reducing unemployment? Will he congratulate the wool textile export companies which are managing in difficult times to increase their exports?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Last year, manufacturing investment grew by about 6¼ per cent. to reach its highest-ever level, and I agree with her comments about the wool textile industry.

Mortgage Rates

13. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he will next meet the Council of Mortgage Lenders to discuss mortgage rates.

16. **Mr. Sedgemore:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he will next meet the Council of Mortgage Lenders to discuss mortgage rates.

Mr. Major: I have no present plans to do so, although I recently met the chairman of the organisation, Mr. Birrell.

Mr. Wilson: Does the Chancellor accept that the smug levity with which the Economic Secretary answered the previous question about mortgage rates paid scant respect to the hundreds of thousands of people who are suffering profoundly because of the Chancellor's one-club policy on interest rates? Does he accept that, according to the Building Societies Association, over 400,000 families in Britain are subject to legal action for recovery of arrears because of the mounting problems of interest and mortgage rates? Does he have any message of comfort to offer those people, many of them in my constituency, or is what he has to offer represented only by the kind of rubbish that we heard from the Economic Secretary?

Mr. Major: There was neither rubbish nor smug levity in what my hon. Friend said. If the hon. Gentleman consults the Council of Mortgage Lenders or the Building Societies Association, they will tell him without reservation that mortgage arrears account for only a small amount of repossessions and that the principal problems that cause repossessions and other difficulties are marriage break-ups and other marital concerns. They have repeatedly made that clear, and Mr. Mark Boleat of the Building Societies Association did so yet again in recent days.

Mr. Sedgemore: When the Chancellor is told by his Permanent Secretary that 70,000 mortgage holders are six months or more in arrears does he say to himself, "How could I conceivably have been so incompetent, so ignorant and so irresponsible as to ruin the lives of so many people?"—or does he not care?

Mr. Major: I understand the concern of people with mortgage difficulties. The hon. Gentleman, who phrased his question with his usual charm, should bear it in mind that the number of borrowers in serious difficulties remains a very tiny proportion, as traditionally they have been. He will be aware, because I know that he takes an interest in this matter, that the Council of Mortgage Lenders recently issued all sorts of indications of precisely how the lending societies can help people who are in mortgage difficulties. The societies are doing so and I hope that they will continue to do so.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 June.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe): I have been asked to reply.

Mr right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has given an address at the luncheon of the North Atlantic Council at Turnberry. Later today she will begin a visit to the Soviet Union.

Mr. Janner: As the Prime Minister is about to leave for the Soviet Union to lecture people there about how to run a free market economy, will the deputy Prime Minister use his moment of freedom to tell the House and the nation why he thinks our economy is in such a shambles? What does he say to our constituents who cannot meet their mortgage instalments and to industrialists and employers facing ruin because of the high levels of inflation and mortgages? What does he say about the unparalleled trade deficit and to people labouring under the unfair chaos of the poll tax? What does he say—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is not fair to take so long.

Mr. Janner: How can this Government lecture others when they have ruined our economy?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will find that the people and the leadership of the Soviet Union will envy the record of this Government's management of our economy over the past 10 years. The problems today are put into perspective by the fact that manufacturing investment this year is advancing on the record level of last year which was itself a record on the year before.

Q2. **Mr. Couchman:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 June.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Couchman: In view of the link between listeria and French brie, the hallucinatory effect of French wines, the carcinogenous effect of Perrier water and the certain transmissibility of mad frogs disease, will my right hon. and learned Friend make contingency plans to impose a ban on all French agricultural products and comestibles lest France should fail to honour the agreement that was signed in Brussels this morning?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand why my hon. Friend is concerned about the way in which matters have proceeded in the last few days. However, he must understand that the most important conclusion is that there should be a properly operating free market in agricultural produce throughout the Community in compliance with the law. I am sure that he will be glad to know that this morning the European Council of Agriculture Ministers reached agreement to end the ban on imports of British beef to other continental countries. The agreement will be considered by legal and scientific experts this afternoon. The Council will reconvene to give its approval to the documents produced. All member states will accept imports of British beef from tonight, and the European Community Commission has reaffirmed its belief that British beef is safe.

My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food hopes, by leave of the House, to make a statement on these matters at the conclusion of proceedings on the Food Safety Bill.

Mr. Hattersley: Will the Lord President tell the House what the standard rate of income tax will be after the next Budget?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: In all the questions asked by shadow spokesmen over many years that one beats all records for stupidity. One matter that Chancellors of the Exchequer like, properly, to reserve to their Budget statement is the level at which income tax will be fixed for the year ahead. The nation can take great comfort from the fact that for the past 11 years a succession of Chancellors have progressively introduced lower and lower rates of income tax.

Mr. Hattersley: My only criticism of that answer is that I think that the question is even more stupid than the right hon. and learned Gentleman made out. As there is unanimous agreement that he cannot predict the level of taxes under this Government in six months' time, will he ask the chairman of the Tory party to stop asking for predictions about the level of taxation under the next Labour Government?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am glad to say that successive Chancellors of the Exchequer under this Government have set targets for the reduction of income tax and achieved those targets. This nation continues to display a constant interest in the prospect of tax policy from the Labour party, if that were ever to be relevant. The real point is that the Labour party cannot carry any conviction as a tax-cutting party when successive Labour Governments have always put taxes up.

Q3. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 June.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Bowis: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that it remains the Government's policy to protect working people from excessive mass picketing and secondary action, and will he take every opportunity to explain this policy to trade union leaders, perhaps by taking up some of the many invitations to attend trade union conferences that have been rejected by the cocoonist advisers of the Leader of the Opposition?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am glad to take this opportunity to remind the House and the nation that if there were to be a Labour Government, introducing the industrial relations policies of which the Labour party talks, there would be a risk of a return to mass picketing and the disgraceful scenes, to which the House became accustomed, outside premises such as Grunwick. We should be interested to know why the Leader of the Opposition has shown himself so unwilling to explain his policies, even on this matter, to the trade union movement.

Q5. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 June.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Knapman: Will my right hon. and learned Friend turn his mind again to the subject of beef? Is not it now certain that the French and German Governments have contravened article 30 of the treaty of Rome, and must therefore compensate our farmers for the substantial financial losses that they have suffered over the past few weeks, or are we to have partners who want all the privileges of free trade but none of the obligations?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to draw attention to the need for the rules and obligations of the Community to be uniformly applied and observed throughout the Community. That is why it is so important that my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has today been successful in securing the commitment that he has secured at the Council of Ministers.

My right hon. Friend will be able to deal with my hon. Friend's point in his statement this evening.

Q6. **Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 June.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. O'Brien: Has the deputy Prime Minister had the opportunity to examine what is happening in the water industry, with the £5 billion that the Government wrote off in debts, the £1·6 billion that was given for the so-called green dowry and the fact that the taxpayer lost in general over £3 billion on privatisation? Is he aware that water charges have increased by more than double the rate of inflation, that in Yorkshire the standing charge has doubled, which means that the people who use least pay most in unit costs, and that the connection charge in Yorkshire has increased from £300 to £1,150? Is not that a shocking and abysmal record? Is not it time that the House had a chance to discuss the situation in the water industry, and who runs it?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman would do well to remember that one of the closing acts of the last Labour Government—now many years ago—was savagely to cut investment in the then publicly owned water industry. A principal reason why the private sector, on assuming responsibility for the industry, must now make substantial investments is as the consequence of years of neglect under public ownership and Labour Governments.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that it is apparently possible to increase Government spending by many billions of pounds while, we are told, it is unnecessary to raise income tax on people whose incomes are equal to or less than that of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley)?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot begin to explain such reasoning. The House will remember that under previous Labour Governments spending, borrowing and taxes increased, and that income tax payers were especially affected.

Q7. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 June.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Ms. Quin: The Government are on record as saying that they want to help the countries of eastern Europe to tackle the problems of environmental pollution. Of course, that is vital, but what example are we giving eastern Europe by failing to insist on a full programme of flue gas desulphurisation for our power stations? Moreover, the Secretary of State for the Environment—who is in Brussels today—will apparently argue for a weakening of the EEC commitment to curb emissions of carbon dioxide?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The lesson is that the Government have introduced an effective and comprehensive programme for environmental improvement in relation to all forms of pollution. The realism of our target for carbon dioxide reduction has been specifically confirmed by Dr. Houghton, chairman of the working group of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. He has the best evidence available in relation to our proposals.

Q8. **Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 June.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm the Government's support for Manchester as the venue for the 1996 Olympics? Does he agree that that would be good not just for the north-west of England, but for the entire country, and will he ignore the sour-grapes attitude that has been adopted by certain people in the Birmingham area?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am not responsible for the attitude of people in the Birmingham area, but I gladly confirm that Manchester is Britain's preferred candidate. Manchester and the north-west have a long and illustrious sporting tradition, and we are glad to support it. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has written to the president of the International Olympic Committee in support of Manchester's bid.

Q9. **Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 June.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Callaghan: Is the Minister aware that nearly all the textile mills in my area have closed? Is he further aware that three more are now to close, including the Mars mill at Castleton, with the loss of 540 jobs? Will he tell the House what the Government will do to help the textile industry, and those workers who have been thrown on the industrial scrapheap?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Government will continue to support the textile industry in the negotiations that we undertake within the context of GATT and the multi-fibre arrangement. I remind the hon. Gentleman that the most recent survey produced at the beginning this week by the Association of British Chambers of Commerce shows that nearly two thirds of firms expect to increase their export orders, and nearly three out of five expect to increase their work forces in the year ahead. There is substantial evidence for the belief that export performance will continue to improve.

Mr. Speaker: Sir Hugh Rossi. [HON. MEMBERS: "Where is he?"] Mr. Alan Williams.

Mr. Alan Williams: Thank you for an unexpected surprise, Mr. Speaker.

Q11. **Mr. Alan Williams:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 June.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the right hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Williams: May I, in turn, refer the right hon. and learned Gentleman to a question I put to the Chief Secretary a short time ago? He failed to answer it, so I hope that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will do so. Will he confirm what the Chancellor of the Exchequer said on Tuesday—that manufacturing investment in this country would have been £30,000 million higher under this Government had the growth rate under the Labour Government been maintained? Does he think that that is a major factor in explaining why a surplus of £6,000 million on manufacturing trade has deteriorated into a deficit of £16,000 million?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The right hon. Gentleman must have failed to hear the point I made earlier, when I said that even in the current year manufacturing investment is expected to increase. Last year was itself a record for manufacturing investment, as was the year before. Total business investment has increased by some 40 per cent. during the past three years. That is a substantial record of achievement, and it will be maintained.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): Will the Leader of the House state the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe): The business of the House for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 11 JUNE—There will be a debate on European Community affairs with a motion to take note of the White Paper on developments in the European Community July to December 1989 (Cm. 1023).

Consideration of Lords amendments to the Property Services Agency and Crown Suppliers Bill.

TUESDAY 12 JUNE—Second Reading of the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill *[Lords]*.

Motion to take note of EC document relating to Community railway policy. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

WEDNESDAY 13 JUNE—Remaining stages of the British Nationality (Hong Kong) Bill.

THURSDAY 14 JUNE—Estimates day (2nd allotted day). Until about seven o'clock, there will be a debate on training followed by a debate on low income statistics. Details of the estimates concerned and the relevant Select Committee reports will be given in the *Official Report*.

Motion on the International Fund for Agricultural Development (Third Replenishment) Order.

FRIDAY 15 JUNE—Private Members' motions.

MONDAY 18 JUNE—There will be a debate on a Government motion to approve the defence estimates 1990 (Cm. 1022/1 and 1022/2) (1st day).

[Tuesday 12 June:

Relevant European Community Document
4478/90 Community Railway Policy
Relevant Report of European Legislation Committee
HC 11—xvi (1989-90) para 3

Thursday 14 June:

Estimates, 1990-91, class VI, vote 1.

Third report from the Employment Committee of Session 1989-90 on Employment Training (House of Commons Paper No. 427) and the Minutes of Evidence taken before the Committee on 2 May 1990 (House of Commons Paper No. 394-i), so far as it relates to training.

Estimates, class XIV, vote 7.

Fourth report from the Social Services Committee, Session 1987-88, "Families on Low Income: Low Income Statistics" (House of Commons Paper No. 565), the Government's reply to that Report (Cm. 523), the fourth report from the Social Services Committee, Session 1989-90, "Low Income Statistics" (House of Commons Paper No. 376), and memoranda laid before the Committee: "Households Below Average Income: A regional analysis 1980-85", a study commissioned by the Social Services Committee, Session 1989-90. (House of Commons Paper No. 378-I) and "The Income Support System and the Distribution of Income in 1987", a study commissioned by the Social Services Committee, Session 1989-90, (House of Commons Paper No. 378-II.)]

Dr. Cunningham: As the Prime Minister is making a timely visit to Moscow, at a time of important movements in world and European events, can we be assured that on her return to this country she will make a statement in this Chamber on her discussions with President Gorbachev?

Can we now hope that, as the Police Federation conference has taken place, the House will at last have the opportunity to debate, as it should have done many weeks ago, the Police (Amendment) Regulations order concerning the implications of poll tax for policemen and women and their families? Given the latest news of mounting chaos in towns and cities in Britain because of the nightmare of trying to administer that bureaucratic, expensive and unfair tax, should not we have the opportunity to debate the poll tax as soon as possible? I hope that the Leader of the House can now confirm that that long overdue opportunity will be given to the House.

When we debate developments in the European Community on Monday, who will be speaking on behalf of the Government? Will it be the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry giving his view of Government policy on Europe or will it be the Foreign Secretary—or will we hear one view at the beginning of the debate and the other view at the end?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I invite the hon. Gentleman to read in full, as I doubt whether he has yet, the speech of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. He will find that it contains many points that are almost exactly in line with those that I made in a speech a week before and which represent a contribution to the important developments that will take place during the years ahead in the EC. It is right that such matters should be advanced.

As for long overdue opportunities, we have been waiting now, I think, since 3 April for the fully worked out alteration to the poll tax which the Opposition's director of communications told us their major policy statement would contain, but we still wait in vain. That is the long overdue opportunity.

Dr. Cunningham: That is not relevant to next week's business.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Nor was the hon. Gentleman's original question.

The police orders have been the subject of active discussion through the usual channels, as the hon. Gentleman knows, and I am concerned to see that they are debated at a reasonably early stage. I shall make an announcement about the arrangements for their debate in my next business statement.

I can confirm that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will make a statement in the ordinary way on her return from the Soviet Union.

Mr. Terence L. Higgins (Worthing): In view of the continued representations from the Liaison Committee, is my right hon. and learned Friend yet in a position to announce that he will take steps to amend Standing Orders so that the Select Committee on Health and Social Security can be divided in order to conform with the split into two Departments?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I can confirm that the Government are prepared to agree that there should be separate Select Committees to reflect the split in the Department of Health and Social Security. I think that it would be for the general convenience of the House if those arrangements were to take effect from the beginning of the next Session.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): I welcome the statement that the Leader of the House has just made, but will he confirm that the House will have a chance to vote on the proposal so that the two new Select Committees can start operation at the beginning of the new Session?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I shall need to think about the precise point raised by the hon. Gentleman, but I shall certainly consider it.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): May I ask my right hon. and learned Friend a question relating particularly to his responsibilities as Leader of the House? May we have a debate soon on Short money? After all, as of this week, we are one party fewer and one campaign more. When does a campaign become a party? How energetic does it have to be? Would I, as an ordinary Back Bencher, qualify to become a campaign and receive Short money, particularly since I am as energetic as any Member of the former Democratic party? In fact, none of them are here today.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am not sure about my hon. Friend's entitlement to qualify for Short money, but it is clear from his valuable contribution that he is not short of ideas.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Will the Leader of the House tell us now or next week the arrangements for right hon. and hon. Members to see the closed-circuit experiment on sign language for deaf people of our proceedings?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for reminding the House about that. As he will recollect, it follows from the experiment on subtitling just before the recess. The recording of Prime Minister's questions, accompanied by on-screen signing for the deaf, will be played back in the No Lobby between 5 and 6 pm today and on Tuesday and Thursday of next week. The broadcasting Select Committee wants the reactions of as many Members as possible to both experiments so that we can assess the acceptability of on-screen signing to the House. I hope that as many hon. Members as possible will have a chance to look at the recordings either today or next week.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): The House of Lords is constitutionally entitled to overturn the War Crimes Bill, but this House, as the elected Chamber, is entitled to overrule it. When does my right hon. and learned Friend expect that we shall have an opportunity to discuss that important moral and constitutional issue?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the importance of that topic, which has been debated in both Houses more than once. Both Houses have now voted on the matter in opposite directions, by substantial majorities. Clearly it is right that we should have an opportunity to reflect on that, in view of the announcement made by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on Tuesday.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): We are to have a debate on low income statistics next week, but will the Leader of the House turn his mind to a much wider debate on Government statistics—particularly as, last night, the Secretary of State for Health used some very doubtful statistics in supporting the Government's policy of imposing eye test charges? The Secretary of State's statistics were totally at variance with both a survey by my own party of 1,700 opticians and a report by the Consumers Association that is to be published tomorrow. Given the importance of eye tests in preventive health, does the Leader of the House agree that we should have another rally around the course—this time, using proper statistics?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have never yet encountered a topic on which there has not been an ample choice of statistics. I dare say that that is true in respect of the subject to which the hon. Gentleman refers. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State yesterday presented effective statistics, but I shall bear in mind the hon. Gentleman's remarks.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I thank my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House for his announcement concerning the future of the Select Committee on Social Services. The work load being undertaken by that Committee is becoming intolerable, monitoring as it does one half of total Government expenditure.

Will my right hon. and learned Friend arrange for our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to make a statement in the House on the progress of the negotiations concerning the multi-fibre arrangement? I understand from the textile and clothing industry that Britain's Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is standing out against practically every other country, in seeking to phase out the MFA over five years when most of the other countries concerned—and third-world countries in particular—seek a 10-year phasing out. May Britain's important textile and clothing industry, which still employs nearly 500,000 people and is concerned for their future, expect a statement soon from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The topic of the MFA and its relationship to the textile industry is raised in the House on many occasions—quite often by my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton). I am not in a position today to add anything fresh, but I shall bring my hon. Friend's remarks to the attention of our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): When may we have an opportunity to debate the implications of pit closures? Is the Leader of the House aware that British Coal announced yesterday the closure of Denby Grange colliery —the last remaining pit in my constituency—with the loss of about 500 jobs? That makes total job losses in the Wakefield area under the present Government number 16,000. Is not it scandalous that not one scrap of Government help has been given to Wakefield district to help generate alternative employment? When will the Government give up worshipping market forces and start thinking about human beings for a change?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Decisions on pit closures remain a matter for the British Coal Corporation. The Government are not able to intervene, and do not seek to do so. In making such announcements, British Coal is following the procedure agreed with the unions. The coal industry, like any other, depends above all on competitiveness and

efficiency for its survival. I am glad to say that there have been substantial improvements in its productivity in recent years, and we hope that it will be maintained.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): Will my right hon. and learned Friend find time for right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House to express their concern at the news that Mr. Gorbachev is apparently threatening to restrict the emigration of Soviet Jews—particularly as there seems to be a misapprehension that a significant number of Soviet Jews are settling on the west bank, which they are not?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend raises two relatively distinct points. Over the years, the House has shared his concern for the freedom for Jewish people, among others, to emigrate from the Soviet Union. So far as it is necessary to do so, I am sure that that matter will be in the mind of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister this week.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Is the Leader of the House aware that, despite all the efforts made over the years to preserve the lives of kidney patients, recent reports have shown that no fewer than 1,200 people die unnecessarily every year because of the lack of donor kidneys? Is it not possible to take advantage of the fact that 75 per cent. of people are willing to donate kidneys? They cannot currently be accepted, because the system has failed. May we debate that subject next week?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The right hon. Gentleman seldom fails to raise a point of importance, and the issue that he has just raised is one with which the whole House will have sympathy. He raises so many that I could fill almost every week with debates at his request. I shall consider that request as sympathetically as I can.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): Is it my right hon. and learned Friend's intention to schedule a London debate before the House rises for the summer recess, as it has been many a month since we last had the opportunity to discuss issues affecting London—including, of course, the many successes of Conservative councils within the city?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend offers a beguiling reason why we should have such a debate at an early opportunity. I am not sure how far I shall be able to be beguiled by him.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): Given that the Stevens inquiry stated clearly, without any ambiguity, that there was collusion between the police and terrorist groupings in Northern Ireland, and given the penetrating insights of the Yorkshire Television programme "Shoot to Kill" at the weekend, will the Leader of the House ensure that we get an opportunity soon to debate those fundamental issues within the House?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Neither Mr. Stalker's nor Mr. Sampson's inquiry found evidence of any offence, such as incitement to murder, as would be comprised within what has loosely been called a "shoot-to-kill" policy. There is not and there never has been any such policy in Northern Ireland. No doubt there will be opportunities in the weeks ahead for debates on that and other matters affecting Northern Ireland.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that virtually every day there is a new report of the closure of some reservoir or lake because of toxic blue-green algae spreading across it, following the appalling incident last September in my constituency, when 23 sheep and 15 dogs died? Since this is now clearly becoming a serious national pollution problem, will he arrange for the Secretary of State for the Environment to make a statement about the matter next week?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot arrange to have a statement on that matter next week, but I can and will arrange to draw the strong manner in which my hon. Friend expresses his view to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is not it important that there should be a debate on the War Crimes Bill as quickly as possible, since all the evidence shows that there remains a large majority in this House who believe that the Bill should proceed? Is not it important that, if there is a conflict between the two Houses, the views of the elected Chamber must prevail?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It is precisely that question which requires reflection. It is only 72 hours since the other place debated the matter. Both Houses have considered it carefully on more than one occasion and have reached conclusions by large majorities in opposite directions. It is plainly good sense to allow some reasonable period to elapse to allow full consideration of what was said in the debates in both Houses.

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): May I dissent from the view that my right hon. and learned Friend has just expressed? There is widespread indignation in the country, as one poll has already demonstrated this morning, and there is strong feeling on both sides of the House, that wrong action—wrong both constitutionally and morally—has been taken by the other place. Surely the best thing is for this House to resolve, as quickly as it possibly can, where it stands on the matter and what it wants done.

Mr. Winnick: Well said.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand the strength of feeling on the subject of my right hon. Friend the Father of the House. Both Houses of Parliament have contributions to make to the proceedings of Parliament, and it is right for the views expressed by each House on a matter of this gravity to be considered carefully in both Houses. I understand the strong feelings expressed by my right hon. Friend, but it is a matter on which there are strong feelings not only on both sides of the House but on both sides of the question.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): Does the Leader of the House accept that there has been a disastrous effect on the shellfish industry caused by the fishing ban, and the disorganised methods used by the Government to introduce it? Will he accept that there are important unanswered questions, such as why the industry was never consulted and why certain species were banned, yet two days later the ban was lifted on the flimsiest of grounds? Will he also study the situation, as compensation should be offered to the shellfish fishermen, given the state of the industry? As so many Government Departments were involved, and the industry is in deep trouble at present, can we have an urgent debate on the subject?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand the anxiety felt by those in the industry about the point raised by the hon. Gentleman. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Health made a statement about one aspect of it in the House on Tuesday, and I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's points to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): In view of the persistent and undenied rumours that the Prime Minister has withdrawn her veto on our entry of the exchange rate mechanism, will my right hon. and learned Friend ensure that whoever speaks for the Government on Monday explains how it is that it will be posible to resolve the conflict between a rigged exchange rate and the requirements of domestic monetary policy and, having entered into stage 1 of the Delors proposals, how we shall avoid being dragged by the Commission and the other nation states of the EEC into stages 2 and 3, with a single central bank and a single currency?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It sounds as though my hon. Friend is likely to make a speech in Monday's debate, if he catches your eye, Mr. Speaker, of as much interest as usual. Having attended the Madrid summit in which we set out quite clearly the conditions on which we would join the exchange rate mechanism, I must confess that I do not recognise his description of a veto in respect of that matter. He will recall that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made it plain in her speech in Aberdeen that membership of the European exchange rate mechanism was entirely consistent with effective and strong domestic monetary policy.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Could the Leader of the House arrange for an urgent statement this afternoon from the Secretary of State for Transport on the safety implications of the management-engineered dispute involving some 7,000 British Airways workers at Heathrow? Is he aware that I have an eight-page list of 75 engineering faults and incidents that occurred in the 11 days up to Tuesday of this week, many of which could be life threatening? For example, on Sunday, the captain of a Boeing 747 reported that the engine fire detection loop was unserviceable, yet he was given dispensation to take off. Has nothing been learnt from Kegworth? Why will not the Government and the Civil Aviation Authority come clean about the risk to passengers flying British Airways out of Heathrow?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman made the most helpful contribution that could have been made on cool consideration of the subject. I am advised that safety is not compromised and that aircraft are properly certified as safe before they fly.

Mr. Robert Dunn (Dartford): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that those of us representing constituencies in the county of Kent are becoming extremely concerned and anxious about the delay in an announcement as to the final route of the high-speed link? Is he aware that we were promised an announcement at the end of March, again at the end of April and again at the end of May? We are now well into June and the continuing delay is causing great hardship, counter-rumour and upset to many people in north-west, mid and south Kent? Will he please therefore undertake to make the strongest representations possible to those who are responsible for making an announcement?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend, together with others of my hon. Friends who represent Kentish constituencies, makes a point which he is entitled to make, and of course I shall bring it to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. There will be some opportunity to refer to the matter in the debate next Tuesday on the document relating to Community railway policy, but I shall draw his point to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): While I welcome the Lord President's announcement about splitting the Select Committee on Social Services, when does he hope to report progress in setting up a Select Committee on Northern Ireland as that also affects the House?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot take that matter any further today than I have on previous occasions. I shall of course discuss it with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Will my right hon. and learned Friend arrange for an early debate about the quality of the postal services in this country? Does he agree that the recent report by the Mail Users' Association has fully demonstrated the need to introduce competition into the postal services?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I know that the quality of those services is not a matter that concerns only my hon. Friend. I shall certainly draw his point to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to see whether there is an opportunity for it to be considered more widely.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Has the right hon. and learned Gentleman yet found time to mug up on the need for an up-to-date maritime archaeology Bill, a matter which I raised with him many months ago and about which he appeared singularly uninformed?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman has been so uncharacteristically episodic in his references to the matter that, although I mugged it up some time ago, I am now almost as ill-formed as I was when he first raised it. However, I will be in touch with him when I have had another look at the matter.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): My right hon. and learned Friend will be aware that, according to some sources in the Soviet Union, over 60 per cent. of Soviet agricultural production never reaches the consumer because of defects in the storage and transportation systems there.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Forty per cent.

Mr. Sayeed: Over 60 per cent. of Soviet agricultural production.

According to some Soviet sources, there is a possibility of famine in parts of the USSR next year. Bearing in mind the instability and misery that that will bring and following my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's present visit to the USSR, would it be possible for us to have a debate on

how this country could best assist the USSR to move to a freer market, and therefore to a better system for agriculture and transport?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I was struck by the fact that, even on that crucial matter, there was a moment of statistical insecurity between my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed) and my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton). I do not know how far I can take a discussion in this House on fundamental repairs to the Soviet economy. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will have some interesting things to say about that on her return next week.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Is the Leader of the House aware that, earlier this week, 15 local government officers from Poland came to this country to study local democracy? Given that fact, will he make time for an urgent debate on poll tax capping, when he can explain to the country and to the 15 Polish local government officers how local democracy exists under capping? Why when the people of Calderdale and in the other 19 authorities voted overwhelmingly Labour and for a Labour Government, did the Government decide that they knew better than the ballot box? Would not our Polish friends be confused and say, "We have just got rid of a regime like that. Why are we here learning about one that is doing exactly the same?"?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: There is an element of fantasy in the hon. Lady's anxiety to ensure proper information for our Polish visitors about the working of a democratic society under the rule of law. The steps in relation to charge capping are being taken in accordance with legislation passed by this House and following the votes taken in this House, and are now being considered by the courts in accordance with the rule of law. That is an impressive performance to commend to our Polish friends.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): Can my right hon. and learned Friend confirm a statement that I think he made at Prime Minister's Question Time? Did he say that there would be a statement from my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on the outcome of the EC Council of Ministers earlier today?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Yes, Mr. Speaker. As I said in Prime Minister's Question Time, my right hon. Friend is attending a further meeting of the Council of Agriculture Ministers this afternoon to consider the legal and experts' representations on the conclusions already reached. He hopes to be able to make a statement to the House this evening at the conclusion of proceedings on the Food Safety Bill. That representation has been made to you, Mr. Speaker, and it is, of course, subject to the consent of the House. My impression is that the whole House would like to hear an early statement from my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Leader of the House review his decision about the need for a statement about the dangerous game being played by British Airways, in connivance with the Civil Aviation Authority, which has allowed certificates and approvals to be given on unsafe aircraft, including Concorde and scores of others, during the past fortnight? Those aircraft have supposedly been maintained and repaired by a handful of management, when 7,000 engineers are on strike. Nobody would believe that that handful of people could manage, maintain and repair those aircraft. Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that I have here a computer printout of the number of aircraft that have been flying during the past fortnight, but which are unsafe? He has a duty to the House to make a statement on the matter and to get the dispute resolved.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I will of course bring to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport the point that was made so vehemently by the hon. Gentleman. If the matter is one tenth as serious as his rhetoric implies, I hope that he will urge upon those who are currently taking industrial action the necessity to get back to work as soon as possible.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): My right hon. and learned Friend will be aware of the popularity of "spot the ball" competitions. May I suggest to him a parliamentary version in *Hansard*, called "spot the promise"? My right hon. and learned Friend will be aware that the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) said on 13 February that there were only two definite Labour promises, yet even in yesterday's *Hansard* we find promises from the hon. Members for Livingston (Mr. Cook) and for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) on the first two priorities of the next Labour Government. May I therefore suggest that it must be a very popular competition, and the prizes, which would be very generous, should be supplied by the Labour spokesman making the promise and would be commensurate with the cost to the taxpayer?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I was waiting for the last part of my hon. Friend's question. Of course I am in favour of a competition that is designed to draw attention to the matters that he has in mind. He also had the good sense to indicate how such a competition could be financed.

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): Is the Leader of the House aware that on Tuesday, under the Standing Order No. 20 procedure, I attempted to get the House to debate the Government's disgraceful and complacent attitude to football ground safety and the fact that, in particular, the Football Licensing Authority, which should have been set up by 1 June under an Act of Parliament, has not been set up? There is no chairman and there are no members. As that vehicle is to implement Lord Justice Taylor's recommendations, and local authorities and football clubs throughout the land are awaiting the tablets of stone from that body, will the Leader of the House agree to arrange a debate on that important subject in the near future?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot undertake to arrange a debate on that topic at this time. I shall bring the hon. Gentleman's point to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. I hope that the House will join me in expressing satisfaction at the vigorous way in which law enforcement authorities in Italy are already upholding the law in advance of the football competition there, expressing the hope that British football fans will behave with dignity and in a fashion that upholds the honour of this country, and also expressing the hope that our teams are as successful as they deserve to be.

Mr. Edward Heath (Old Bexley and Sidcup): Would not it save a great waste of time and the tedium of listening to a tiresome speech yet again from my hon. Friend the

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Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) if my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House were to arrange for a junior economist to take him quietly aside this weekend and explain to him the simplicities of the relationship between European currencies, which are so well understood by the other 11 members of the Community?

I commend my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House on the attitude that he has taken towards the vote in the House of Lords about the War Crimes Bill. In that he is absolutely right. He has spoken about the need to maintain the rule of law. That is what the House of Lords has set out to do. It has not been influenced by the lobby being run from California on this matter.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): This is not a business question.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The right hon. Gentleman must have an opportunity to put his point. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Heath: May I ask the Father of the House to calm himself? We do not want to lose him.

Sir Bernard Braine *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I believe that the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) may have misheard the comment from over his shoulder. I do not think that it was made by the Father of the House.

Mr. Heath: As this matter has been brought up about 42 years after the agreement was reached between the leaders of all parties in this country and by those who had fought through the war and by those who had lived through that process——

Sir Bernard Braine: You are not the only one.

Mr. Heath: No, but I stand by agreements reached by political leaders. As that was done, there is no haste whatever——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. If the hon. Lady interrupts the former Prime Minister that will delay our proceedings. I ask the right hon. Gentleman to bring his remarks to a conclusion.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): This is what the House is about.

Mr. Heath: I have sat now through 20 years of screaming in my ear from my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman)— *[Interruption.]*

Dame E. Kellett-Bowman: Your argument was defeated. We now want the Bill.

Mr. Heath: It is too much. I shall now stand through her screaming on her feet.

The Leader of the House is quite right. There is no constitutional crisis and there is no need whatsoever for further debate in this House.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My right hon. Friend has contributed to an already interesting business questions by making them even more so and by concluding his observations by urging me—I commend this as a model to be followed by others—not to have a debate. That is a point of agreement. My other right hon. Friend, the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), has equally vigorously urged me to have a debate. Their contributions underline the importance of the issue and the need for us all to reflect on it carefully.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Does the Leader of the House regard the long title of the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Bill as having sufficient scope to enable hon. Members to explore the legal processes whereby planning decisions are reached in Scotland, given that the Secretary of State for Scotland has recently ruled that there should be tests for drilling at Dounreay by Nirex, and given that that is an attitude which——

Sir Bernard Braine *rose—[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Has the hon. Lady finished?

Mrs. Ewing: Given that that decision——

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): The right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) has steam coming out of his ears.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Ewing: Given that that decision clearly overruled the democratically expressed views of the people of the highlands and islands—and, indeed, the people throughout the length and breadth of Scotland—if it is not possible for us to consider that matter in the context of our deliberations on that Bill, will the Leader of the House arrange an early debate on that issue, because the people of Scotland are furious about the decision that has been taken?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am obviously not in a position to give any kind of ruling—I should be unwise to try—on the scope of the long title of the Bill to which the hon. Lady has referred. As I understand it, the reasons for the decision arrived at by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland were fully set out in his letter of 14 May, when he made it plain that he had considered the matter on its merits—as he was obliged to do. However, I shall bring the hon. Lady's points to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Will my right hon. and learned Friend consider giving time for a debate on the British and European beaches about which the Commission has notified our fellow member states in the Community that they will be prosecuted under the bathing water directive? It is important that British tourists who are travelling abroad this summer should know the location of those beaches, and it is important that we should be able to discuss what action will be taken by the water companies to clean up our own beaches in the United Kingdom.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand that my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Miscampbell) will have an Adjournment debate, which will deal to some extent with this topic, next Wednesday,

13 June. However, my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) is right to draw attention to the need for the uniform enforcement of obligations in respect of this matter throughout the Community and to the need for the availability of information about it throughout the Community. I shall bring his points to the attention of my right hon. Friends.

Mr. Cryer: Will the Leader of the House provide a statement early next week, instead of showing such a complacent attitude, about the industrial dispute between British Airways and the ground staff? Does he accept the right of British Airways' management to enter into this shabby conspiracy with the Civil Aviation Authority, whereby aircraft are nominally certificated although there is a huge list of faults on aircraft that are flying passengers today? Those faults include faulty fuel gauges. I have the list with me.

This is happening because British Airways management are attempting to impose a 12 hour day on the engineers without them having the right to proper negotiation. It is a shabby arrangement. The Leader of the House should do something about this attempt by the management of British Airways to impose a diktat on people who have a perfect right to engage in proper negotiations and consultation and who want to keep our planes in the air safely, but who are denied that object by the attitude of the British Airways management.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Again, the hon. Gentleman's intervention is extremely interesting. He asks for proper negotiations and consideration. I have no doubt that the management are entirely ready to undertake proper negotiations and consultation. That would be greatly facilitated if he urged those now taking industrial action——

Mr. Cryer: I urge the management, who are responsible.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: —to return to normal working. I say that with some enthusiasm, because he should know that 12-hour shifts are not uncommon in the industry. They are worked by British Airways engineers at Gatwick. That is the basis on which I urge the hon. Gentleman to urge those taking industrial action to desist from it and start negotiating.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Is not it time that we had another debate on local government finance? In making his decision, will my right hon. and learned Friend contrast the performance of the Labour party—which yet again, after no less than four years, failed to come up with its alternative to the community charge last month—with the performance of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), who took only a few days to come up with a respectable policy? Does my right hon. and learned Friend think that there might after all be a job for my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley as an adviser to the Labour party?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am not sure that he would wish to undertake such a hopeless task.

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 1071 on the case of Jonathan Moyle.

[That this House expresses its deep concern at the strange death of British journalist Jonathan Moyle, Editor of Defence Helicopter World, found in the cupboard of his Santiago hotel room, hanged by his own shirt from a bar 5 ft 4 inches from the ground although he was 5 ft 8 inches tall, with his shins bruised, traces of sedatives in his stomach and blood stains on his sheets; notes that he was investigating the Chilean arms industry; notes that he was in touch with the British defence attaché in Santiago; deplores the foul attempts to smear Mr. Moyle being made by British security 'sources'; deplores the attitude displayed by Her Majesty's Embassy in Santiago towards Mr. Moyle's death and to his family, as publicly complained of by Mr. Moyle senior; demands that Her Majesty's Government fully investigate the demise abroad of yet another British journalist; and calls for a full statement from the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.]

It deals with the mysterious death of an English journalist abroad. I ask the Leader of the House to find time to debate this sinister story. The Chilean police now believe that Jonathan Moyle was murdered, although the British embassy tried hard at the beginning to say that he had committed suicide.

We have the mystery of the death of a young, talented journalist and former service man and of why British sources quoted at the weekend in *The Sunday Times* and *The Guardian* spread the story not only that the journalist committed suicide but that he was involved in some dark, seamy dealings at the point of his death. It is a strange and mysterious story of the death of yet another British journalist overseas. The House could do with a debate on the matter, and I urge the Leader of the House to give it consideration.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand why the hon. Gentleman has raised that point. Clearly, it is an important matter. He will understand that it is for the Chilean authorities to determine the cause of death. A Chilean investigation is under way and is being pursued vigorously. We have no reason to doubt either the expertise or the integrity of the examining magistrate. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is in regular contact with Mr. and Mrs. Moyle and Her Majesty's consul in Santiago is in close contact with the examining magistrate. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and the British embassy in Santiago stand ready to assist in every way. I shall bring the hon. Gentleman's specific point to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Robert Hayward (Kingswood): Further to the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) and the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon), can we have a debate fairly soon on charge capping, and will my right hon. and learned Friend ensure that plenty of time is allowed for it?

In the case of Avon, the Audit Commission produced figures last year which show that while Avon employs about the right number of lecturers and teachers—slightly below the average—the back-up staff employed by the education department exceed the expected norm for a county council of Avon's size by over 1,000. Is not that a classic case of a Labour-controlled authority spending vast quantities of money on back-up staff and not on front-line services?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend has raised a very good example of an important point. One of the principal objectives of the reform of the education system introduced by the Government is to induce the use at the

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point closest to the classroom of the largest proportion of educational resources that can be there deployed. One of the effects that we want to see is a diminution of administrative staff at headquarters and an enhancement of the quality of management and performance at the chalk face.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the Leader of the House arrange for an early debate on the procedures used for the appointment of chairmen to health authorities and the proposed self-governing hospital trusts? Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman realise that such a debate would provide an opportunity to warn the Secretary of State for Health that, if he were to appoint Councillor Eric Pickles, the failed captain of the Tory flagship in Bradford, to either post in Bradford, it would be regarded as a provocative insult to those working in the health services? It would also be most offensive to the public of Bradford who rely upon the public health service and who watched Councillor Pickles do his damnedest in the past two years to destroy local community services.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: As the hon. Gentleman knows, there is room for exactly two views on that question. he is entitled to express his, but the fact that he has made his comments may underline for other people the benefit of doing exactly the opposite of what he has suggested.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): Has my right hon. and learned Friend noted the amendment tabled yesterday by 68 hon. Members to early-day motion 1063?

[Line 1, leave out from 'House' to end and add notes the concern of the people of the Isle of Sheppey over the provision of local hospital facilities, so thoroughly expressed by the honourable Member for Faversham in the adjournment debate he instigated on 20th April; recognised the belated interest of the Labour Party in this issue, as evidenced by their Parliamentary Lobby of 5th June; notes the deliberate selection of a date when they knew that the honourable Member for Faversham would be abroad on Parliamentary business; finds it curious that the Lobby met the unrelated honourable Members for Wakefield, Halifax, Workington and Cardiff South and Penarth, rather than those representing Kent constituencies; deplores the exploitation of a genuine local concern for party political purposes; and supports the honourable Member for Faversham in his long-standing campaign for improved hospital facilities for the people of Sheppey.]

Does my right hon. and learned Friend appreciate that the amendment reflects the widespread disgust of hon. Members at attempts to undermine a Member in his own constituency, particularly when it was known that that Member would be abroad on parliamentary business? Can my right hon. and learned Friend take steps through the usual channels to see that political rivalry does not descend into the gutter?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The time I have had available in which to study the important text referred to by my hon. Friend is less than I would normally wish for. I shall certainly study the matter with care and reflect on what he said.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Apart from the hooliganism we have just seen on the Tory Benches, the Leader of the House will be aware that there was a great deal of interest and controversy about potential hooliganism in Sardinia. Football is trying to eradicate this, but it cannot get a move on because the Home Office will not set up the Football Licensing Authority. Is he aware that it should have been set up earlier this year, but was postponed until 1 June? It is still not in being, but local police forces, clubs and councils want to spend cash and liaise. They are ready to prevent hooliganism next season, but they cannot do so because of the Government's incompetence. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman at least arrange for a statement to be made by the Home Secretary next week so that he can tell us what is happening?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's judgment. I hope that he shares the general contentment expressed in the House that the international machinery for the notification of offenders is in good working order, as seen by events in the past 48 hours. I shall bring his other points to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend, but at least let us join in taking some comfort from what has already happened.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Is the Leader of the House aware of early-day motion 1077 on freedom of speech in Turkey?

[That this House condemns the actions of the Government of Turkey in issuing decree 413 on 10th April which abolishes press freedom and introduces wide-scale censorship; notes that since its introduction reporting of Kurdish issues has been prevented, newspapers closed down and many journalists imprisoned; and demands that the British Government make representations to the Turkish Government demanding that a free press be allowed in Turkey.]

Will he, when he has read it, make arrangements for a debate in this House on the treatment of Kurdish people in Turkey and Iraq and, more importantly, the British Government's continued support of the Turkish Government, despite their oppression of Kurdish people, and their continued trading policies with Iraq, despite its use of chemical and biological weapons against the Kurdish people? Does he believe that those slurs on civilisation should be treated far more seriously than they have so far by the British Government and that the House should be given the opportunity to discuss them?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: While I am not prepared to agree with the hon. Gentleman in all his remarks, we certainly understand the concern expressed in the motion at the restriction of press freedom in Turkey. We look to the Turkish Government to restore full press freedom as soon as possible.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): May I support the call made by my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) for an improvement in postal services, particularly in London where we still have no Sunday collections although they operate in the rest of the country? We want such collections.

A debate on postal services would also give me the opportunity to bring before the House the need for better postal services in parts of west Ealing and Hanwell in my constituency. I could also draw attention to the aggravation and annoyance felt by elderly people in Northolt at Grange court——

Mr. Winnick: The hon. Gentleman should write to the local postmaster.

Mr. Greenway: The hon. Gentleman does not care about elderly people, but I do. The post box used by those elderly people has been arbitrarily removed and that is forcing them to walk a mile or two across busy roads to the nearest post box. We should have a debate on postal services so that the House can consider those matters.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I join my hon. Friend in recognising the importance of the point he makes. He says that the House should consider those matters. No hon. Member is more adept than he at bringing such matters to the attention of the House.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): May I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 1066, which stands in my name and that of several other hon. Members, which congratulates the Isle of Skye Camanachd Association on its first ever victory in the Camanachd Cup at the shinty final last weekend in Fort William? *[That this House warmly congratulates the Skye Camanachd Association over its victory in the final of the Camanachd Cup; notes that this is the first occasion in the history of the competition that the trophy has gone back to the Isle of Skye; hopes that this well-publicised and popular result will lead to a continuing increase in both interest and participation in the game of shinty; and expresses appreciation to Glenmorangie whisky for their valued sponsorship of the sport.]*

Would the deputy Prime Minister care to add his congratulations to the team?

But more important, will he tell the Chancellor of the Exchequer—given that the interest and participation in shinty is on the increase—that a popular move by the Government, and one which would encourage the game, would be to remove the imposition of VAT on the sale of shinty sticks?

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: Hear, hear.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am only sorry that the sport is not as familiar to my countrymen in Wales as it obviously is to the occupants of the outer isles. I am sure that the whole House will join me in congratulating Skye on its historic victory, but I do not think that those congratulations necessarily lead us to the conclusion that the entire structure of the VAT system should be transformed.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): Will my right hon. and learned Friend arrange for an early statement to be made on the situation in Cambodia in the light of alarming reports coming from Oxfam and others of an offensive by Khmer Rouge forces, who are getting close to Phnom Penh, with the horrific possibility that the vulnerable people of that area will again be overrun by the tyranny of Pol Pot?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The whole House never misses an opportunity of expressing its revulsion for the tyranny of Pol Pot and his cronies, as the saying goes. I re-echo that sentiment and will draw the point that my hon. Friend makes to the attention of the Foreign Secretary.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): It appears that the right hon. and learned Gentleman has accepted, at any rate to a degree, the destructive element of poll tax and poll tax capping on the education and social welfare systems of local authorities. Will he make sure that the poll tax orders are debated by the House individually and separately?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I shall have to consider the best way of bringing those matters before the House when the time is right.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Could we at last have a debate on the state of the franchise? It is clear that the Government are involved in manipulating electoral registration. There is a problem, in that a Home Office circular issued on 1 May shows that it is possible to overcome the provisions of the Representation of the People Act 1989, which established the extension of the franchise to many people overseas.

The imposition of the poll tax has resulted in 600,000 people not being on the electoral register who could be expected to be on it. The House should debate this serious matter and examine the evidence; it shows that a problem will arise at the next general election, which will not be based on the type of franchise to which we in this country have been used in the past.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The hon. Gentleman has raised that matter for the second time in as many weeks.

Mr. Skinner: What is wrong with that?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: There is nothing wrong with it, but it shows that the hon. Gentleman has already found an opportunity to raise the matter. If it is as serious as he suggests, no doubt his right hon. Friends will arrange for it to be raised on an Opposition day. The hon. Gentleman will recollect that the arrangements made for the extension of the overseas franchise, about which he seems to be concerned, were supported by his right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparbrook (Mr. Hattersley) and the other main political parties.

Points of Order

4.24 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Leader of the House announced that the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food would make a statement on his return from the important discussions in Brussels on the future of the British beef industry.

Surely it would be for the convenience of the whole House if that statement were made as soon as possible. I believe that discussions through the usual channels would show that we would agree to the statement being made as soon as the Minister is available, rather than waiting until some time after 10 o'clock tonight. We shall have to intervene in the business on the Food Safety Bill in any event because that business will not conclude at 10 o'clock. We should have a statement as soon as possible because the matter is of considerable importance to beef producers and, of course, to consumers of beef in this country and abroad.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Sir Geoffrey Howe): You will appreciate, Mr. Speaker, that this matter has already been considered as far as it can be in the short time available. I understand that it would be out of accordance with the normal procedures of the House for proceedings on a Bill that is before the House to be interrupted by a statement of that kind. It was for that reason that I indicated that my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food would make a statement at the conclusion of proceedings on the Food Safety Bill. Of course, I am perfectly ready to look at any arrangements that can sensibly and effectively be made to meet the point made by the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) but, as I understand it, that is not possible. I cannot take the matter any further at this stage.

Dr. Cunningham: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I said that we will have to intervene in the business at some time unless the statement is to come at 1 o'clock or 2 o'clock in the morning. We do not know when the business on the Food Safety Bill will finish; there is no guarantee that it will conclude at 10 o'clock. As there will be at least one Division at about 7 pm, that is likely to provide a natural break in the proceedings and it seems perfectly proper, possible and reasonable for us to have the statement then rather than in the early hours of the morning or during an intervention in the business at some artificial time. I cannot see what is wrong with my suggestion.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I think it unlikely that my right hon. Friend will be back by 7 o'clock. I thought that I was meeting the convenience of the House by indicating that he would be looking for an early opportunity to make his statement. The time that I have suggested has been established as the most convenient, consistent with the normal practice of the House. Obviously I shall look at the matter again, because I do not want to give the impression that there is no alternative. I understand that the right time, subject to your guidance, Mr. Speaker, is at the conclusion of proceedings on the Food Safety Bill.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): I should like to raise a point of order, details of which I gave you, Mr. Speaker, before today's proceedings. It relates to the protocol and convention of the House about hon. Members taking up constituency issues in the constituencies of other hon. Members. There is an increasing tendency for Opposition Members to raise matters in the county of Kent in constituencies in which they have no standing or locus.

Question 53 on page 7561 of today's Order Paper was put down by the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw). In that question, the hon. Gentleman seeks to raise a constituency interest in the constituency of Dartford which I represent. He gave me no notice of this. He did not ask my permission, nor did he inform me of his intention, and that is important bearing in mind that the hon. Member for Dartford is raising the incident and issue with which the question is concerned with his usual robustness and vigour.

What protection can be afforded to hon. Members when hon. Members from other parties are not prepared to obey and conform to the usual protocol and conventions of the House? If the conventions are not obeyed, a tit-for-tat process is bound to emerge, to the detriment of all hon. Members, and we will descend into a form of parliamentary if not local anarchy, which would be much to the confusion of the people that we represent.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman draws attention to the convention, which I think the whole House appreciates, about going into the constituency of another hon. Member without letting him know. I do not think that there is anything which says that there is an absolute bar on putting down questions that might cover what is happening in another Member's constituency. It is quite clear that the hon. Gentleman has been prosecuting this matter with vigour in his constituency. I suggest that he takes it up with the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) and draws it to his attention.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Well, we have a heavy day ahead of us.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I think that you are in a position to help the House in relation to what the Leader of the House has said—that, in his opinion, it is not procedurally possible to intervene in the course of debate on the Food Safety Bill in order to have a statement. If that is the case, then that ends the matter.

You, Mr. Speaker, could help by indicating whether that is acceptable. Most hon. Members will recollect that on Fridays it is quite normal for the proceedings to be interrupted at 11 o'clock for private notice questions or statements, whether the House is engaged on private Members' business or on a Bill. In order to further discussions that have taken place through the usual channels, may we have your guidance on what is possible?

Mr. Speaker: I am prepared to give my guidance. Statements are normally made at 3.30 pm or at 11 am on Friday. It would be exceptional to interrupt the business in the middle of a debate to make a statement unless the matter was of such urgency that it could not wait. That has rarely happened. I appreciate that it may be for the convenience of the House if the statement is made at a natural interruption of business this evening, and I judge from what the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) has said to the Leader of the House that discussions about this are going on through the usual channels. Such a request has not yet been made to me, and

I imagine that it will be, when the discussions end. However, it would be exceptional to interrupt the business of the House at 7 o'clock just because it suited the people concerned. We must stick to our rules.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This concerns the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn), which shocked many hon. Members, bearing in mind the fact that the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) gave no notification of his interest in a constituency matter of my hon. Friend. Will you guide us further? In your initial response, you spoke with great emphasis, but there appears to be a vague feeling that hon. Members notify other hon. Members of a visit to a constituency only if they are in the same party. That seems rather extraordinary. Will you confirm that the conventional courtesy is that hon. Members notify parliamentary colleagues, irrespective of party, of a prospective visit to a constituency?

I had an example in my constituency last year, when the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) went to my constituency without notifying me of his visit, and said that he intended to do the same on many other occasions.

Mr. Speaker: It has long been the convention of the House that hon. Members visiting other Members'constituencies should notify them of such visits. I hope that the House will keep to the conventions because they have arisen so as to ensure good order, and good relationships between Members of Parliament.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Skinner, as he has been mentioned.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): We all know what those thin-skinned people on the Tory Benches do not know, which is that Ministers go to our constituencies. One went to mine recently, and never told me about it. He made a diversion from north-east Derbyshire, called in to Bolsover, and did not even tell my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes). We did not get het up about it, and we did not come to complain to you, Mr. Speaker, because we do not think that it is important. My hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), who represents Windscale, or Sellafield, finds that his constituency is mentioned regularly by hon. Members on both sides of the House. People visit it. According to the adverts, Members of Parliament from all over the place go there every week. It is a free country. Some of us travel around to spread a message that is contrary to that spread by the Tory party.

Several of my hon. Friends raised a point about the appalling practices of British Airways at Heathrow. Are we expected not to mention it? Are we supposed to tell those on strike, "Sorry, we cannot find the Member of Parliament who represents the area"? I went to Wapping God knows how many times. Do you mean to tell me that I should have gone to see somebody every time, Mr. Speaker? It is a joke.

Mr. Speaker: It may be a joke, but it is also a convention. There is a distinction between visiting a constituency on a general matter and visiting it in connection with a matter of specific constituency interest. The good sense of the House can determine the difference.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I should like your advice about another parliamentary convention. I believe that this is a matter directly for you.

This place works on the basis of parties, which enjoy certain privileges. Several times this week, Mr. Speaker, you have been questioned about the implications of the Social Democratic party dissolving and becoming a campaign for social democracy. Hitherto, two SDP Members of Parliament—the hon. Members for Greenwich (Mrs. Barnes) and for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright)—have enjoyed opportunities to speak frequently so as to express their party's view. Their leader, the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), has frequently caught your eye, Mr. Speaker, at Prime Minister's Question Time and on other occasions. Will you reflect on that in the future, and can you advise us whether independent Members, representing an independent SDP and a campaign outside the House, will continue to enjoy the privileges that they have enjoyed in the past?

Mr. Speaker: When a party is dissolved, it is dissolved. Without going too deeply into how my discretion is exercised in the matter, let me say that I should have to look on those involved as individual Members. I am not quite certain that a campaign is a party——

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I have not finished yet. On reflection, perhaps I have.

Mr. Cryer: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I interrupt you briefly? There is money involved. The SDP was an organised party, and was allocated Short money to finance its position in the House. With its dissolution, and its change to a campaign, surely that money should be refunded and any outstanding payments cancelled to ensure that the Short money does not go to a party that is not in existence.

Mr. Speaker: That will be a matter for the authorities of the House, and I understand that discussions are in progress.

BILL PRESENTED

Pensioners' Television Licences

Mr. Keith Vaz presented a Bill to amend the Wireless Telegraphy Act 1949 to exempt persons of pensionable age from paying the full fee for certain wireless telegraphy licences: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 20 July and to be printed. [Bill 156.]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I will put together the two Questions on the motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft Home-Grown Cereals Authority Oilseeds Levy Scheme (Approval) Order 1990 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Home-Grown Cereals Authority Levy (Variation) Scheme (Approval) Order 1990 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Ordered,

That European Community Documents Nos. 7398/88 and 4218/90, relating to voting rights for Community nationals in local elections in their Member State of residence, be referred to a Standing Committee on European Community Documents.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

Orders of the Day

Food Safety Bill *[Lords]*

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New Clause 1

PROHIBITION OF IRRADIATION

'.—(1) Nothing in section 17(1) shall be taken to confer any power on the Ministers to make regulations permitting, whether or not subject to conditions, the irradiation of food intended for sale or for human consumption; or the sale or preparation of such food.'.—*[Dr. David Clark.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

4.36 pm

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss also new clause 7—

FOOD IRRADIATION COMMISSION

'.—(1) There shall be established a body to be called the Food Irradiation Commission ("the Commission") to perform the functions assigned to the Commission by or under this section.

(2) The members of the Commission, of whom there shall be not less than ten, shall be appointed by the Minister after consultation with such persons and organisations as he considers appropriate, and shall include at least one representative each from a consumers' organisation and from a food enforcement authority.

(3) The Commission shall give advice to the Minister on matters relating to the implementation of this section or the exercise of any power conferred by it, or otherwise relating to food irradiation, where the Commission consider it expedient, or they are requested by the Minister to do so.

(4) The Commission shall have a duty to examine all matters relating to food irradiation and shall draw up a plan to do so.

(5) The plan established under subsection (4) above shall include—

(a) measures to establish the effects of irradiation on pesticide residues and other toxins in food;

(b) measures to establish the effects of irradiation on vitamin content and nutritional value of food;

(c) measures to establish the effects of irradiation on food additives and food packaging material;.

(d) measures to establish a diagnostic test to determine whether food has been subject to irradiation;

(6) No regulations under this Act authorising the irradiation of food shall be made before the results of the plan established under subsection (4) above have been published and such plan has been subject to scrutiny by both Houses of Parliament.'.

Dr. Clark: We are discussing the Bill at a most appropriate time, when the entire country's attention is focused on food safety as a result of bovine spongiform encephalopathy—the mad cow scare—and the Minister's efforts in Brussels, to which we shall refer later this evening.

If we had not had the BSE scare, probably one of the most contentious issues relating to food safety would have been food irradiation. As Opposition Members have made clear, we welcomed the Government's intention and efforts in bringing forward the Bill. We did not vote against it on Second Reading, although we generally felt that it did not go far or fast enough; we had a useful and constructive

Committee stage, in which we made progress. However, the one issue that deeply divided the two sides of the House was food irradiation.

Food irradiation is a technology looking for a use. For the past 50 years, it has been hawked around the world as a panacea for food poisoning. The British Government have sacked thousands of scientists in food and agricultural research; have cut the number of vets employed by the state by 27 per cent.; have allowed the shortage of environmental health officers to amount to more than 420; have closed research stations; and have weakened regulations. That has resulted in an inevitable food poisoning epidemic. In their desperation, the Government have jumped on the irradiation bandwagon. They see it as the easiest route out of their self-created problem. It is their magic quick fix. However, their actions are wrong, for a number of reasons.

It is ironic that, as the rest of the world begins to turn its back on irradiation, our hard-pressed and desperate Government have seized on the technology as a drowning man clutches at a straw.

It is interesting that even in Europe, where tentative steps have been taken towards Europeanwide legislation —that is the only sensible approach in the long term— there have been difficulties. The European Commission put forward limited proposals for irradiation—much more limited than those that the Government are proposing. The European Parliament rejected them. The Commission has now put forward even more limited proposals. It is rather strange that our Government, alone in Europe, appear to be rushing headlong into adopting legislation.

When the Minister responds to the debate, I hope that he will tell us why the Government have announced their intention to proceed with legislation on food irradiation even before the draft directive has been agreed in Europe. It is nonsensical. Why jump the gun? Why do the Government want private investors to invest in very expensive irradiation plants when the European Community may make the process illegal? I draw the Minister's attention to the House of Lords Select Committee report published on 12 December 1989. There is a weakness in the Government's case that highlights their desperation to find a way out of their problems with food poisoning.

The Opposition have fundamental objections to irradiation and we oppose it for a number of reasons, many of which we have outlined previously in the House and in Committee. The first and possibly the greatest weakness in the case for irradiation is the fact that there is no test. It is illogical to allow a scientific process that even the Government and the European Community accept can be dangerous if too high levels of irradiation are used. If it cannot be told whether a product has been irradiated, the extent of the irradiation cannot be measured. That is a basic weakness which makes the whole process potentially dangerous.

Re-irradiation is even more dangerous. The kilograys are cumulative. If food is irradiated at 10 kilograys—the maximum permitted by the EEC—and then it is done again, that makes 20 kilograys, which is above the safety level. There is no way to test whether the food has been irradiated. That is the most basic weakness in the case for irradiation.

We are constantly told that irradiation is a well-known, well-established science, although I believe that much of the information relating to it is rather sketchy at times and selective. Much of the science of irradiation was carried out many years ago and much of the new information coming on stream casts doubt on the process. For example, we do not know sufficient about the effects of food irradiation on pesticides, food additives or food packaging. There are more and more complicated chemical cocktails in our pesticides. We hope that they are more effective and, indeed, more environmentally friendly. Certainly, we should be trying to achieve that. However, many of the pesticides leave persistent residues on the skin of the food. We do not know the effect of irradiation on the chemical cocktails that make up those pesticides. We may know the effect of irradiation in isolation, but not in a mixture.

4.45 pm

That view is held by the Department's scientists. We often hear Ministers saying that they always take the advice of their scientists. We know that that is not the case —they are most selective and take advice only when it suits them and saves them money. The Department's research consultative committee's residues sub-group expressed concern about

"the irradiation of commodities which contained pesticide residues and associated inert substances and the possibility of these residues being transformed into more toxic radiolytic products."

I hope that the Minister will think again about that aspect of irradiation and, for once, listen to his scientists. If he has better scientific advice than that, perhaps he can tell us what it is.

Another basic objection to irradiation involves the argument that it can be used to clean up contaminated food. Conservative Members who are in favour of the technology say that that is impossible. Not only can we challenge that argument but we can give chapter and verse of food that was presented as good food when previously it had been condemned as unfit. I do not want to bore the House, but it is important to put it on the record because we are having some difficulty in persuading Conservative Members that it happened. Bad food can be dressed up as good food.

I shall cite an example that has been proven in the courts of law in this country. In 1986 Young's found that prawns that it had imported did not match its public health standards. It sent the prawns to Gammaster's in Holland for a quick fix—they were irradiated—and they were then re-imported. They passed the bacteriological tests and were sold for human consumption. That is a proven case.

There are many other examples that have not yet been proved. Indeed, I informed the Minister's predecessor of a number of specific cases. I accept that it is difficult to get the cases to stand up in a court of law. However, it is a widespread technique that is known in the trade as "Dutching". If that sort of abuse happens when irradiation is illegal, I find it hard to believe that it would not continue if irradiation were legal. Irradiation will become the charter for the food cowboys. It is for that reason that most of the reputable food processors and food retailers in Britain will not touch irradiation with a bargepole. They reject it because not only do they believe that their food is safe, but they know that their consumers will reject it.

The other argument is that if we accept irradiation there will be no incentive for the food processors to follow the good and proper hygiene practices that are so necessary

and that we intend to espouse if the Bill is enacted—for example, training, handling, and ensuring that the whole food chain is subject to good hygiene practices. Irradiation will lull people into a sense of false security. There is no alternative to properly organised and structured hygiene standards.

To make matters even worse, none of the recent incidents of food poisoning could have been prevented by irradiation. I use the word "incidents" as opposed to "scares" because "scares" implies that nothing happened. In these incidents people have tragically died. That is not media hype; it is fact. Therefore, let us consider some of the incidents and see whether irradiation could have tackled the problem.

The first great incident happened just 18 months ago when the then Under-Secretary of State for Health made her famous—or infamous—statement about eggs. That was the salmonella incident when we had the whole debate about chickens. The truth is that irradiation would not have helped one iota. Eggs cannot be irradiated. The Government took the right approach by tackling the disease at source and in that they had the Opposition's support. We are pleased that they took that approach. Equally, it is difficult to irradiate chickens. The European Commission has dropped the concept of irradiating chickens. Sliced chickens can be irradiated, but not whole chickens without exceeding the safety levels of kilograys.

Of late, we have also heard a great deal about cheeses. About 15 months ago the then Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food threatened to ban soft cheeses from France because they carried listeria. The French Minister of Agriculture put pressure on him and our Minister caved in to that French pressure. History has repeated itself today.

What did we hear on Friday? Did the Minister intend to retaliate and ban French cheeses? No. He told the Tory Euro Members of Parliament, "We are not quite sure." But the newspapers had the story that we would take action against potentially dangerous French cheeses. The argument was—there is a certain logic in it—that many French cheeses are made from unpasteurised milk and there is some evidence that they could carry listeria. The matter is so serious that the American Government will not allow any soft French cheeses to enter America unless they are certified to be made from pasteurised milk. According to the American Government scientist, there is a safety risk, but irradiation would not help that one iota because cheese cannot be irradiated.

My hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) was very involved in the environmental health officers' discovery of contaminated paté from Belgium on sale in a supermarket in his constituency. But paté cannot be irradiated, so that would not have helped.

I could go on. We know that irradiation can kill bacteria, but it does not remove the toxins that are left behind in the food and in some cases it may not kill the spores that they form. There is an argument that killing the bacteria and leaving a sterile environment creates the conditions for new bacteria to breed in greater confusion. That argument applies if food has too long a shelf life.

There was the case of botulism in hazelnut yogurt. But that was due to toxins, not in the yogurt but in the purée, so irradiation could not have been used in that case where, tragically, two people died.

In the last 10 days my constituency has been affected by the shellfish issue. As the Minister knows, there has been a little controversy about that. When it was drawn to the Department of Health's attention that mussels off my constituency, which usually have a safety level of 400, were found to have a level of 20,000, it rightly issued warnings about their safety and urged people not to sell them. However, the Ministry did not excel itself, because it took seven days to publish the result of tests on other shellfish, crabs, lobsters and prawns, during which time the livelihood of many fishermen was put at risk.

But the point is that if any of those shellfish had been irradiated, even if they had been just above the safety level, they would not have been made safe because the contamination is the result not of bacteria but of toxins, and irradiation cannot kill toxins. The significance of that is that it is often argued that the real benefit of irradiation would be in the shellfish industry. Yes, it would kill the bacteria, but it would not kill the toxins which, by and large, are the fatal element in shellfish poisoning. That is why a major shellfish retailer, Mr. Ken Bell, in Newcastle has launched, at considerable expense, a long campaign against irradiation. When I asked why, he said that his shellfish were clean and good and that he could guarantee them. He did not believe that he needed to irradiate them in order to sell them. He believes that irradiation would diffuse the shellfish market because some cowboys would bring in shellfish which appeared to be clean but which were not, as happened in the 1986 Young's case—a proven case which no one can challenge.

Let me make one obvious point which must be made because some people are under an illusion. Irradiation would do nothing to kill the BSE agent causing mad cow disease.

As we press ahead with the move towards irradiation, other countries are turning their backs on it. Australia, which used to have irradiation, now has a three-year moratorium on it. Numerous states in the United States of America are now banning irradiation. It is often alleged that irradiation is widespread in the United States of America, but in most states it is illegal and most people do not realise that it is licensed for only two ranges of products—spices and tropical fruit. Irradiation is not used for any other products in the United States. Recently, Sweden has also announced a ban on the process. Tragically, as the rest of the world moves in one direction, the British Government move in the opposite direction —the wrong direction. The Government have taken that action because it is more palatable than the situation in which they now find themselves.

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): I have listened patiently, as have other right hon. and hon. Members, to the hon. Gentleman, who has been quick to make assertions but —surprisingly, in view of the length of notice of this debate —whose speech has been sadly lacking in detail. If he agrees that 50 to 60 per cent. of all food poisoning cases reported involve poultry, can he counter the comment made by no less a distinguished person than Professor Bevan Moseley, head of Reading food research institute, that the number of food poisoning cases in the United Kingdom could fall to 60 per cent. of the present number if irradiation is introduced? On the findings of which scientists do the Opposition base their arguments?

5 pm

Dr. Clark: Obviously the hon. Gentleman will try to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have not given precise details because on Second Reading, in previous debates in the House, and in the Standing Committee on the Bill on 27 March, I quoted a number of scientists. I did not wish to labour that particular point again today. I have my doubts about the information that the hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory) gave. It is generally alleged that most food poisoning incidents of late were related to eggs. I also repeat that even the European Commission now says that whole chickens cannot be irradiated because the bone interferes with the process. One can irradiate sliced chicken, but that is only a partial answer. The real answer is a proper hygiene code.

The Government are obsessed with irradiation because they cannot face up to the alternative of a complete U-turn. They will have to increase the number of state vets, whose numbers have been cut by 27 per cent. since the Government came to office in 1979. The Government will have to do something about training and finance for the environmental health service, which is currently 420 officers under strength. They will also have to do something about trading standards officers, who are currently 300 under strength. The Government will have to do something about bringing together new groups and teams of research scientists, so that problems can be tackled at the root, and about introducing tough new regulations to protect public health. The Government are not prepared to make a U-turn because that will cost them money—even though they know that they are putting the health of the public at risk by neglecting to make that U-turn. They turn instead to irradiation.

Irradiation is the only option that the Government will entertain. They view it as a cheap option, but it is one which nobody wants. Many reputable organisations oppose irradiation. The list goes on and on. They include the Institution of Environmental Health Officers, the British Medical Association, the National Federation of Women's Institutes, the Consumer Association, most food retailers, and even the National Farmers Union.

I conclude with the most telling point of all, made by the technical executive of Marks and Spencer, Dr. Tom Clayton, who encapsulated the argument against irradiation best when he said:

"If food is already safe, as we believe it is, in our shops, there is no need for this extra process of irradiation."

And he is absolutely right.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): Throughout the progress of the Food Safety Bill, irradiation is the topic that has most taken up the time of right hon. and hon. Members in expressing their concern, yet the Government have consistently shrugged off those concerns and clung to their own starting point—the argument that irradiation is not only safe but to be welcomed.

By doing so, the Government are flying in the face of the British Medical Association, public opinion, and evidence of the practice in other countries. It is hard to understand why they are taking such a hard line when there is no need to hurry. They are pushing through the introduction of a process that has not been fully researched, for which scientific evidence is not complete, and for which no diagnostic test has been developed for ascertaining whether the process is being abused by those with access to it.

Throughout our debates, I and other hon. Members have tabled amendments to meet the Government half way. We tried to place restrictions on the use of irradiation and to ensure that it is not introduced short of the introduction of techniques that will reassure the public that it is safe. The Government have resisted them all throughout. I tabled an amendment requiring novel food processes to be subject to affirmative resolution by both Houses. Another sought to list specific areas of concern that needed to be identified before irradiation is allowed and in which there remains some doubt. I refer to the lack of a diagnostic test, the effect of irradiation on pesticide residues and other toxins, food additives and food packaging materials, and vitamins. Another amendment would have delayed the introduction of regulations until the European Community had agreed a common position.

I support Labour's new clause 1, and I have tabled one of my own that is intended to achieve the same effect, although in a different form. No doubt the Minister will argue that the new clauses would serve no useful purpose and that plenty of evidence is already available. We have already heard from the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) that many questions hang over existing evidence and over other matters that the Government prefer to brush aside. The Minister must accept that other countries and many scientific bodies believe that the available evidence is still open to doubt or is against him, and that there is no pressing, urgent case for the early introduction of irradiation. The Minister may feel that the balance of opinion is the other way and that there are advantages in pressing ahead, but he cannot deny that there is a case to be made against doing so. Why should not the proposed new clauses be acceptable?

Throughout the progress of the Bill, the Government have quoted the evidence of the World Health Organisation in supporting their determination to force through legislation on food irradiation, while conveniently ignoring experts who urge caution. I draw the Minister's attention to what the European Parliament had to say on the matter, and to the publisher's note on the book "Food Irradiation Now", which appeared at the request of the WHO. It said:

"But WHO expressly stated that the Committee of Experts had not considered the general safety aspects of the food irradiation process nor had it claimed that food irradiation was safe or that it had no harmful effects on human health or could be applied without any health risks. After a general survey, however, the Committee of Experts have come to certain conclusions on the toxicological, microbiological and physiological acceptability of food irradiated with a total dose of up to 10 kGy."

That is not wholehearted endorsement. The WHO is drawing attention to the fact that it was anything but a wholehearted endorsement—that the committee was satisfied only in respect of certain criteria relating to some aspects of irradiation that it had been asked to examine. That is not sufficiently reassuring to embark on the kind of changes now envisaged.

The European Parliament has expressed many concerns regarding irradiation. It said that, despite decades of research, it was not possible to prove that food irradiation caused no harm to health. It pointed out that practically all scientific studies admit a considerable degree of uncertainty as regards effects on human health, and that it is not possible to prove that food has been irradiated, because there is no technical means of checking. It pointed out that, as a method of conservation, irradiation is no

[Mr. Matthew Taylor]

better or cheaper than other methods. Technological improvements to certain foods are of interest to manufacturers but not to consumers.

The Parliament also pointed out that the use of the technology involved is potentially more dangerous than other types of conservation, at least to employees exposed to risk in the plants, especially in the Third world. Incidentally, irradiation encourages the spread of nuclear technology outside the states that currently make use of it. It pointed out that irradiation can be used to deceive consumers about the freshness or ripeness of food. The microbicidal effect of irradiation varies considerably, and may lead to an increase in germs. It pointed out that the desired objectives of food irradiation can be achieved by other methods, and that it does not provide greater protection for consumers against spoiled food.

If that list of objections is not enough, I shall add another, which should be on the Minister's plate: recently the European Parliament voted by 263 votes to 66 against irradiation. As an EC country, Britain is not allowed to introduce legislation on a subject on which there is a directive pending or when the EC has said that it will legislate, so the Government would be breaking the spirit of that rule by pushing through legislation now.

I cannot understand how, in the face of the bulk of that evidence and of evidence from the British Medical Association, from environmental health officers, trading standards officers and the National Farmers Union, the Minister can still say that he believes that irradiation is proven to be absolutely safe. Until it is, the House should not pass legislation to allow irradiation to go ahead. The old adage, "If in doubt, don't", should apply.

I am glad that hon. Members on both sides of the House have expressed those doubts and I hope that they will do so again tonight, if the Minister pushes the new clauses to a vote and does not accept the case that is being made. I hope that hon. Members will show that what they have said outside this place applies when it comes to a vote inside the House.

I hope that the Minister, at the last minute, will recognise that none of that is necessary. He simply has to swallow his pride and do something to respect and respond to the concerns of consumers, most of the scientific bodies and many people in the industry.

Mr. Gordon Oakes (Halton): I support new clause 1 and the new clause tabled by the Liberal Democratic party, which goes into somewhat more detail. Both are a step in the right direction.

Like the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) and my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), I am amazed at the obsessive determination of the Government, who have an almost evangelical zeal for irradiation. We have heard it from the Secretary of State and from the Parliamentary Secretary. My hon. Friend said that perhaps it is a panacea for the Government; because we do not have enough environmental health officers or Ministry vets, they may see irradiation as the answer. However, it seems to go beyond that because they argue the case for irradiation with passionate concern.

In a press release the Parliamentary Secretary, speaking on 1 March at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food's food science laboratory in Norwich, used these words:

> "A torrent of pseudo-science . . . science fiction . . . myth from publicity conscious activists in the media and elsewhere who are anxious to foist a particular viewpoint on to the public".

That is dramatic language when talking about something like food irradiation.

Who are the people to whom the Parliamentary Secretary is referring? The Consumers Association—I know that the Government do not particularly like that association but it is vocal on behalf of consumers. Who else? The National Federation of Meat Traders, and who knows more about meat than that federation? It is opposed to irradiation. The British Medical Association is opposed to it, and what organisation knows more about the health of the nation than the BMA? The environmental health officers—as my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields said—are opposed and they are the watchdogs whose duty it is to protect public health and to protect people from bad food. They are violently opposed to irradiation. Who else? The National Federation of Women's Institutes—that revolutionary body of pseudo-scientists—opposes irradiation. It is not only the Labour party and the Liberal Democrats; as the Minister knows, many people are seriously concerned that the Government are trying to foist food irradiation upon an unwilling public.

I hope that the Minister will think again about new clause 1 and that some Conservative Members will come into the Lobby and vote for the clause—I am sure that many of them will. This is hardly a party political matter. The Government have made it that, not the Opposition. I am certain that many Conservative Members feel let down by their Front Bench spokesmen because of the Government's evangelical zeal for irradiation.

My hon. Friend the Member for South Shields listed many of the faults of irradiation. We are worried because it is uncertain and not sufficiently tried, tested and proven. Perhaps at some future date experiments will be done to make it safe, but we do not know whether it is safe at the moment.

5.15 pm

My main worry is the lack of detection for irradiation. The Government must admit that food irradiation can mask bad food, although the food may look all right. At present the housewife or purchaser can look at the food and say, "That looks off to me and I am not going to buy it". However, irradiated food looks in pristine health and consumers buy it as a result. If bad money can drive out good, bad food can drive out good food if irradiation is allowed.

I know that the Minister will say that irradiated food must be labelled by the shopkeeper. However, I have not had an answer to the point I raised on Second Reading about cafés and restaurants. If irradiated food is cheaper, the proprietors will buy it and they will not have two separate lists saying that this food is irradiated while that food is not. They will not tell their customers. Therefore, the consumer in the café will not know what he is eating and whether it is irradiated.

There will be no test whereby public health inspectors can detect whether food is irradiated. Nobody can tell how many times food has been irradiated. No one can tell the dosage of radiation. Before one allows irradiated food, it is essential that we know all those things. There must be a detection test, or we will be wholly dependent on the honesty and good will of the retailer, trader or café

The hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory) mentioned food poisoning and quoted an eminent scientist who said that the number of cases would be halved with irradiation. I think that my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields answered that point. I did not know, and I do not think many hon. Members knew, that the only foods allowed to be irradiated in the United States of America are spices and tropical fruits. Can the Minister tell us how many cases of food poisoning and how many deaths have arisen because people have eaten spices or tropical fruit? They are not the causes of the trouble—it is such food as chicken, eggs and cheese, which cannot be irradiated. That is where the mischief is—not in spices and tropical fruit. If necessary, spices could have irradiation treatment. I understand that at the end of 1990 the present methods of making spices safe, using ethlyene oxide, will cease. Irradiation may be the answer, but it is not the only answer. I understand that the recent discovery and adoption by market leaders of a new steam pasteurisation process eliminates the use of ethylene oxide.

Even at this late stage, I ask the Government to listen to public opinion outside and to responsible organisations. They are not wild men but responsible organisations such as the National Federation of Meat Traders, the British Medical Association, the Consumers Association and the National Federation of Women's Institutes. If the Government will not listen to Opposition Members, they should listen to those organisations, and if they will not listen to them, will they please look behind them and listen to the voices that no doubt will be raised in the debate bitterly opposed to the foisting of irradiation on consumers and food in Britain?

Mr. Gregory: This evening we are having an important debate on irradiation, but the speeches from Opposition Members have not been of the substance and quality that one might expect. We have heard a great deal of assertion and have seen a Luddite attitude which will come over clearly to those who follow our debates. However, if we introduce some common sense and scientific thought rather than allegation, we shall put the subject in its rightful context.

The first point on which I support my hon. Friend the Minister is that we are discussing an enabling piece of legislation. It is not forcing irradiation on anyone. Quite clearly, my hon. Friend is looking to those in the industry to introduce adequate tests. I share the concern of right hon. and hon. Members throughout the House about the inadequacy of tests at present and would not wish regulations to be put before the House until trading standards officers and environmental health officers, whom we rightly expect to implement the law passed in this country, should have the ability to check whether food has been irradiated. My hon. Friend has said in the House and in Committee that irradiated food will be labelled. The absence of such a label means that food has not been through that process.

The right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) referred obliquely to his concern about restaurants. A restaurateur would be required to identify those items on the menu that had been irradiated. Irradiation has been shown to be extremely useful in dealing with bacteria, particularly salmonella and listeria. Bacteria is all around us and irradiation is useful in killing or greatly reducing micro-organisms in poultry meat and some shellfish.

I imagine that a number of right hon. and hon. Members are old enough to remember the argument used against the pasteurisation of milk—that it would lead to a relaxation in efforts to reduce cattle disease. But the 3 per cent. of milk that remained unpasteurised was responsible for some 90 per cent. of milk-borne disease. Personally, I would rather herbs and spices were irradiated than put through the present procedures, although industry is looking carefully at that, and I should also feel happier about poultry products that had been irradiated. However, the shopper and the customer in the restaurant will have the choice; we are not forcing irradiation upon them.

Toxicological, microbiological and nutritional effects of irradiation have been studied extensively, and references have been made to a number of United Kingdom scientific committees. The World Health Organisation, the Food and Drugs Administration, the Food and Agriculture Organisation and the Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes show that irradiation has been tried and tested for decades. So we are not talking about a development that has occurred in the past few years; one has to go back to the 1920s when the process was invented. I understand that the 1991 mission into space—the Anglo-Soviet Juno flight—will carry irradiated food because the scientists advising those astronauts consider it the safest form of food.

I share the concern of those who expressed reservations about vitamin loss through irradiation, but clearly the process is favourable, in that it extends storage time. Many of us may have purchased food which, even within its storage life, has not lasted long. Had it been irradiated, those difficulties would not have occurred. Quite clearly, irradiation cannot improve the appearance of food, disguise taste or mask unpleasant odours. In all those respects, food manufacturers, retailers and restaurateurs will be careful before utilising the process.

In conclusion, we are talking about enabling legislation and we should get some common sense into our debate. I am quite sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will not put regulations before the House until adequate tests are in place. It is the right way forward to encourage industry to develop those tests and to ensure that trading standards officers and environmental health officers can enforce them. We should not adopt a Luddite attitude by putting our heads in the sand and saying that we shall throw out irradiation and join the extremely small group of countries that will not permit the procedure.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): I apologise to my namesake, my hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams), for jumping in ahead of him. I also apologise to hon. Members who have participated in debates in Committee and throughout the proceedings on the Bill for intervening at such a late stage, but as a former consumer protection Minister, I cannot allow the Bill to complete its proceedings without intervening briefly to raise a couple of points.

I was most impressed by the speeches by my right hon. Friend the Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) and by my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) and the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) who introduced the new clauses. Contrary to what the hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory) said, I thought that all three hon. Gentlemen spoke with great moderation. There is no doubt about the sincerity of the points they raised, and

[Mr. Alan Williams]

they expressed them with great moderation and no attempt at scaremongering. The hon. Member for York and I have debated consumer affairs for many years, and we are often on the same side. I hope that he will not be offended when I say that the speech that he has just made does him the least justice of any I have heard him make.

The hon. Member accused my hon. Friends of being Luddite and then adopted their arguments. He said that it is Luddite not to permit irradiation, but that we should not introduce regulations until we can monitor them properly. I am sure that he was listening to my hon. Friends, but my understanding was that they were making exactly that point time and again. My hon. Friend the Member for South Shields said that monitoring was essential. If the hon. Member for York adopts the criterion that we should not introduce irradiation until it can be monitored, he should agree that that cannot be undertaken while there is a shortage of 400 environmental health officers and 300 trading standards officers. When those services have been working to full establishment, they are overstretched in the range of their responsibilities. Even on his own basic criterion, the hon. Member for York has been making the same case that we have been trying to make—it is impossible to monitor irradiation.

It is bad enough when something unimportant is impossible to monitor. There are many rules and regulations that we should like to see enforced, but we recognise that they are not of fundamental importance. But in this case we are dealing with health, even with life and death. When public health is genuinely at risk, the benefit of the doubt must always be given to the consumer and to the public. Again, my hon. Friends have been trying to make that point. The Minister has argued at various stages that it is a matter of choice and that people will have a choice because irradiated food will be labelled.

5.30 pm

Good firms will label food but, as my hon. Friends have said, such firms will probably not need to use irradiated food. However, there is no choice if people do not know whether food has been irradiated, and there can be no knowledge where there is no monitoring and no way of testing. How can one have monitoring, for which the hon. Member for York called, if one cannot test? If he and I were to go to a restaurant after the debate to discuss our differences amicably, we could eat a meal of irradiated food and yet be utterly unaware of what we were consuming.

That in itself should be sufficient to cause any serious Minister to step back and to say, "Have we got it wrong?" Other people are willing to admit that they are wrong, so I hope that even at this stage—the consequences of getting it wrong are so serious—the Minister will be willing to recognise that he, rather than hon. Members who have been criticising him, is the one who is out of step.

Other countries are turning back, or saying that they must go no further and should have a moratorium. Other hon. Members have pointed out the severe limitation on the extent of irradiation in the United States, the most open market in the world. That should lead the Minister to realise that there is sufficient doubt about the scientific validity of irradiation for him to say that we should put irradiation aside.

We must think of the dangers implicit in going ahead. We are on the verge of 1992, with its acceleration of uniform rules, regulations and standards. Anyone investing in those processes who saw a 4:1 vote against irradiation in the European Parliament, who saw the European Commission watering down its proposals at each successive stage as it got cold feet, and who realised that the proposal for irradiation would not get through would know that he had to make a rate of return quickly. It may happen that, despite the Minister, Europe will declare irradiation illegal after 1992 and, after all, there is already a draft directive. In a few years, decisions will be made by a majority vote, and Ministers will no longer have a veto. That will be an incitement to those who invest in the equipment and processes necessary for irradiation to ensure that they get a return as quickly as they can.

In the food industry, as in any other, there are many good people, but there are also some villains. Those villains could poison people and could cause enormous damage to public health. The food industry is competitive and the aim is to operate at minimum cost, especially at the quick food end, which has a consumer body of youngsters and children. The quick food industry caters for the most vulnerable and those who have the least experience on which to judge what is safe, yet it is the area most likely to be persuaded to use cheaper, irradiated products. There is danger to the public here, which the Minister appears to be utterly unwilling to address.

New clause 7 proposes a commission. I want to make a rather technical point which is relevant to the proposal. Whether such a commission makes sense depends on the Government machinery within which it operates. As a result of food poisoning and the various scares over the past couple of years, there has been talk of a Ministry of Food as opposed to a Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. That is a misguided approach—and I go further. What is needed is a separate Ministry of Consumer Interests and Affairs.

I do not say that because I am a former Minister in the Department of Prices and Consumer Protection. The Ministry in which I served lasted for six years and then ceased to exist for a reason that would apply to a Ministry of Food. *[Interruption.]* Some hon. Members do not seem to want to listen. I was describing my experience of operating within a Department and trying to achieve some of the benefits that we all want for our constituents. The Department was too narrowly based to be viable in the long term and there was not sufficient work load to sustain it. It did not have responsibility for food, as I should have liked. The same would happen to a Ministry of Food.

I gladly support the commission to deal with irradiation, as proposed in new clause 7. New clause 6 also suggests a monitoring organisation. By the time such organisations had been established, there would be limited work for a Ministry to carry out. However, the paradox is that, if those organisations are to be effective, they need a Minister at Cabinet level able to argue the consumers' case on an equal footing with the sponsoring Ministers arguing the industry's case. Although I support as a step the proposal for the commission and for the monitoring organisation, I ask Opposition Members, when considering the framework of Government that they would like to see, and I ask Conservative Members, to consider the possibility that what is needed is not a narrowly based and

probably non-viable Ministry of Food, but a more widely based Ministry of Consumer Protection, with far wider interests.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): To some extent, I agree with the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) about the idea of a watchdog and protector of consumer affairs who is concerned not only with food, but with consumer affairs in the widest sense. This country lacks a Ralph Nader. He was uncomfortable to many and caused many problems, but he did a good job in America. However, that is an argument for another place, for another time and, perhaps, on another Bill.

We have seen many scare tactics and misunderstandings about irradiation and about the purpose of the Bill. To understand irradiation and what it entails, we should consider the title of the Bill. Clause 7 creates an offence of rendering food "injurious to health" and refers to

"Any person who renders any food injurious to health by means of any of the following operations".

They are set out fully, and they include

"abstracting any constituent from the food; and subjecting food to any other process or treatment."

That is apart from other substances. That matter is at the heart of the Bill.

As my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) rightly said, food irradiation is an old process. It started in the 1920s—it has been around a long time. It is part of many processes to make food good and wholesome, and it must be considered as a process alongside all the other processes. No doubt, if we went back to the early days of food canning—we may have to go back to Mrs. Beeton's days—I am sure that people would say, "We shall get food poisoning. It will not last. People will be very ill." I have not looked at the relevant *Hansard*, but I am sure that such a thought must have prevailed. We also have vacuum-packaging processes and gas treatments such as flushing. Some fruits are kept in inert gases such as nitrogen to preserve them. There are many processes, and irradiation is just another process.

Why are we so worried? We are told that irradiation does not deal with toxins, for example. If we were to can food that contained toxins, it would not make it any better. Even after the treatments that I have discussed, toxins would still remain in bad food. Why single out irradiation because it does not deal with toxins?

Irradiation does not make bad food good. It is an expensive way of dealing with bad food. The discerning housewife or restaurateur will not buy bad food because he or she demands food of high quality. However, irradiation may make bad food safe. That is another matter. By destroying biological processes, irradiation may destroy salmonella and various other things and render food safe, but it probably will not render it palatable. It will not make it the sort of food that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, or I would wish to eat, but it will make it safe.

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): Is the hon. Gentleman advocating that food that is going bad should be irradiated and sold?

Mr. Ashby: Of course I am not. If the hon. Gentleman had listened to my argument he would know that. That remark is typical of the silly remarks that Opposition Members make. It is a red herring—I suppose it is an irradiated red herring.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): A pinkish herring.

Mr. Ashby: As the hon. Gentleman says, a pinkish herring. It makes nonsense of the argument that it creates good food—it does not. Bad food does not become good food as a result of irradiation, but it could become safe food. It is perfectly clear to me and to most sensible people that the housewife and the restaurateur will not buy food that is not of a high standard. Why should they pay a high price because food has gone through that process? It just will not stand the market.

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): Following the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew), I fail to see the subtlety of the argument of the hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby). He is saying that irradiation does not make bad food good, but it makes bad food safe. This is one of our concerns. Is not there a danger that poor-quality food will be irradiated and returned to the market?

5.45 pm

Mr. Ashby: The hon. Gentleman should listen to me. I used the word "may", not "would". I enjoy cooking. I invite the hon. Gentleman to one of my gourmet meals over the weekend, when he may sample something that is cooked with good-quality food. You are invited also, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The good housewife—even the reasonable housewife—and the good Member of Parliament understand good-quality food and know that it will produce certain results. They will not tolerate bad-quality food. That is why the argument that bad-quality food will be irradiated is not sound. The market will not take it.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: My hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) referred to some prawns that were exported to Holland for irradiation and were re-imported into the United Kingdom. How would a housewife know whether prawns had been irradiated?

Mr. Ashby: The hon. Gentleman has obviously never been shopping for prawns. If he had, he would know jolly well what a good prawn looks like and what a bad prawn looks like. I suspect that a bad prawn is good only for a rather bad curry, rather than for a good prawn cocktail. I go shopping, so I have my feet on the ground in that respect.

This is an enabling provision. Irradiation will be subject to careful regulation and monitoring, and it will take place in proper premises that have been built for the purpose. Any food that is to be irradiated will be subject to instant inspection. I return to the tinned food analogy. How can we be certain about the quality of meat or any other item that is going into tinned food? We are satisfied with the quality of that food because food inspectors regularly inspect premises, processes and food. One can imagine the devastation that would be caused by a factory using bad food or a bad process. Several years ago, we had problems with poor meat from a canning factory in Argentina. I well remember the cases of salmonella that occurred as a result of that problem about 10 or 15 years ago. Such poisoning problems are as evident with canning as with any other process. However, irradiation will ensure that there is no salmonella poisoning. That is the one sort of poison that irradiation will eradicate.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: The hon. Gentleman is laying a little too much stress on the example of tinning as a new process that has so far been successful. After all, many new things that are introduced are not successful. Over time, lead in petrol and chlorofluorocarbons have turned out to have bad consequences that were not envisaged at the time of their introduction. The fact that something is new does not necessarily make it right.

If the hon. Gentleman thinks that he can do so, will he publicly examine two prawns and tell us which has been irradiated and which has not? If he were to do so publicly, does he really think that he would get it right?

Mr. Ashby: I could not tell which prawn was irradiated and which was not—[HON. MEMBERS: "Ah."] —but I can tell which is a good prawn and which is a bad prawn——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The hon. Gentleman is truly a veritable gourmet.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: Will the hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) do it?

Mr. Ashby: I would choose the prawn of the best quality. I would reject a bad-quality prawn that had been irradiated and thus rendered safe from bacteria because I should be able to tell that it was of bad quality even though it had been irradiated and was safe to eat. That is my point.

Not only will irradiation be monitored and subject to careful regulations, but irradiated food will also be subject to labelling. We must also bear in mind that there is consumer choice. The housewife—and, indeed, anyone else—has the right to choose the food she buys. That also means that she is choosing the system of food production. Labelling will give the housewife that choice. Nobody is pushing irradiated food down the throats of the public. People will be able to choose whether they wish to purchase irradiated food. Many retail stores around the country have already decided not to stock irradiated food. That is their choice and it will be a matter for the housewife's choice. In due course, the housewife may well demand that certain foods are irradiated. The decision of those retail stores may then be reversed. This is all part of consumer choice and free trade.

I am looking forward to the irradiation of food because it will improve the quality of some foods. Certain foods cannot be irradiated. The Opposition have referred to salmonella in eggs. Eggs cannot be irradiated, but the process can be applied to a whole host of other items.

I look forward to the day when I shall be able to choose tropical fruits that have been irradiated. I was born in a tropical country and have always enjoyed tropical fruits. At the moment most of the tropical fruits that I eat over here have been picked green and do not have the taste of the sun that I remember so well from my childhood. I am looking forward to eating fruits that have been picked much closer to the eating date, which have been ripened in the sun and irradiated so that I can eat them in this country with the full taste that I remember from my childhood. I am very much looking forward to that and to exercising my consumer choice.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Irradiated mangoes.

Mr. Ashby: Yes. I am looking forward to irradiated mangoes, especially the small sweet ones.

The food industry in this country is run largely on the basis of trust, although there is regulation and inspection. The Opposition treat the food industry as though it was based on a conspiracy, but everything that we eat is produced largely on the basis of trust. The food industry is, and has shown itself to be, a trustworthy industry. Spot checks by health officials have shown that in the overwhelming majority of cases that trust has been kept by the food industry. I cannot believe that it will break that trust. I cannot believe that the retail chains will put their good names at risk or risk their livelihoods or the loyalty of their shareholders by putting into the food chain bad quality food which has been irradiated.

The Opposition are engaged in scare tactics. No scientific body can show that the proper irradiation of food is dangerous to health. Indeed, committees all over the world maintain that irradiation is a good system. It is one of many systems, which means that there will be choice. Consumers will not be forced to eat irradiated food which will be carefully labelled. I have no doubt that in due course irradiation will prove to be a popular system. I, for one, certainly look forward to it.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: When I heard the hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) describe how he was looking forward to eating irradiated tropical fruits —and irradiated this and irradiated that—it reminded me of the enthusiasm for beefburgers of the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and of how the right hon. Gentleman was willing to volunteer his little girl to test the safety of British beef. I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman's enthusiasm for irradiation and his appetite for irradiated tropical fruits do not convince me that the process is safe.

Both the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory) have tried to label those who oppose radiation as Luddites and have said that they are somehow anti-progress and that they would have been anti-tin can if they had been born in that age. I must advise the hon. Gentlemen that the British Medical Association is among the opponents of irradiation. The BMA can hardly be described as Luddite because all the medical progress of the 20th century and the improvements in medical care have depended on the rapid implementation of all technical advances, including the use of irradiation. As we know, radiotherapy is part of cancer treatment. The BMA can see the benefits of radiotherapy, but it is discriminating enough to be concerned about the widescale application of irradiation to food for human consumption.

I am no Luddite. My professional training was as a scientist—as a chemist and a research worker in chemistry. I have examined the idea of food irradiation off and on for the past 15 years.

Mr. Ashby: Will the hon. Gentleman explain why only irradiated food is given to people who have had transplants?

Mr. Williams: They need sterile food which contains no micro-organisms.

Mr. Ashby *rose*——

Mr. Williams: I shall not give way again. Irradiation is one of the chief ways of sterilising medical equipment and, in the case of certain illnesses and transplants, food. That is for medical reasons.

Mr. Ashby: It is safe.

6 pm

Mr. Williams: There is no comparison. One cannot conclude that irradiation is safe simply from the fact that someone who has had a heart transplant must eat sterile food. We shall come to some of the dangers of irradiation shortly.

As a chemist I have examined the idea of irradiating food from time to time over the past 15 years. From a naive view, it seems impressive that one can stop potatoes sprouting—that one can interfere so dramatically with a natural process. But, in chemical terms, irradiation fragments living molecules. It fragments proteins and nucleic acids in a random way. It takes a sledgehammer into the food. In every cell perhaps 1 million molecules are split apart randomly. When they recombine they produce a pattern like a jigsaw that has been broken up and thrown together again at random. We have no idea what some of the products of that combination might be. When water molecules are split up hydroxyl radicals and hydrogen atoms are produced. When they recombine the chemical composition has been changed.

As a one-time research chemist in the biological sciences, I am certain in my mind that the materials that are produced from irradiation will include radiolytic products which will be carcinogenic. Establishing that carcinogenicity is as difficult as establishing whether BSE is a hazard to human health. It is extremely difficult to establish because it is impossible to find a test population that is willing, like the hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West, to eat 100 per cent. irradiated food. Perhaps, if he is willing to volunteer to eat such food for the next 20 years, we shall have a better idea at the end of that time. But there is no way of demonstrating the absolute safety of the process.

Much of the research work that has been done and used by eminent scientific committees which advise on safety is incredibly suspect and involves cheating. Much of it is dishonest science. We know that irradiation produces off flavours in food. Fats go rancid and vitamins are destroyed. We do not know what will be the effect of irradiation on food additives and pesticides. Pesticides are already incredibly toxic, but they get into our food and our water supplies. We have no idea what will happen when we irradiate pesticides. We are conducting macro experiments on the human population, and we have no right to do that. There are strong grounds to believe that irradiation may damage food, modify the structure of pesticides and produce even more toxic material.

The dosages involved in irradiation of food are equivalent to about 10 million chest X-rays. Let us imagine a conveyor belt carrying our poultry through the irradiation machine, which is the Government's vision. If a human being was on that conveyor belt, irradiation at that dosage would not only kill the person instantly but kill every single cell in his body. That is the dosage needed to kill every single micro-organism and every cell of every micro-organism must be killed. We are dealing with prolific doses of irradiation.

Let us consider the international use of irradiation. Of the 140 countries in the world, only 39 allow irradiation of food and those only for a narrow range of foods. Less than 0·1 per cent. of food is irradiated internationally. The amount of irradiation is trivial compared with salting, adding sugar, refrigeration, canning, bottling, fermentation, pickling and so on. Yet the Government have it in mind that irradiation of food is one of the key answers to salmonella. The Government have presided over an epidemic of salmonella and now about half the poultry that we buy is infected with it. I am extremely disturbed that the Government regard irradiation as part of the answer. If they have their way, in five or 10 years' time most of the chicken that we buy, whether from a restaurant or supermarket, will be irradiated.

Of the 39 countries that allow irradiation, only 11 allow the irradiation of poultry. We are lining ourselves up with a tiny minority of countries, none of which allows irradiation on a significant scale.

Mr. Gregory: The hon. Gentleman makes a strong point about how we may be in a minority. Will he reveal to the House at what stage the Labour party moved away from its wisdom of the 1974-79 era when it did not ban irradiation but was a party to it? Then the Labour party saw irradiation as a sensible means of dealing with food products. At what stage did it move away from that position to the crass stupidity of the Luddite view that the hon. Gentleman now puts forward?

Mr. Williams: I shall disregard the hon. Gentleman's last remark as not worthy of him. In the past 20 years, the general public, which is much more important than just the Labour party, has woken up to the dangers of science. As the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) said, processes using CFCs and other technologies have gone wrong. The number one technology that has gone wrong is the nuclear industry. The 1974-79 Labour Government supported nuclear energy to some extent, although they did not order any new nuclear power stations. The Labour party is much wiser these days. We determinedly oppose nuclear power, as do the general public. The same goes for all nuclear technologies, including irradiation of food.

I wish to throw back the remark of the hon. Member for York about crass stupidity. The people who stand in the way of the opinion of 90 per cent. of the general public on irradiation are guilty of crass stupidity.

No test is available to detect irradiated food. Several other speakers have already made that point. There is no way in which one can say whether a prawn is irradiated and, if it is irradiated, whether it was irradiated once, twice of three times or whether it received five or 10 times the legal dose. Irradiation is a cowboy's charter because regulating it and proving whether food has been irradiated will be impossible. It is wide open to abuse.

The hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West tacitly implied that there is a danger that bad food will be made, as he put it, safe, but in any case marketable. Internationally, companies will adopt the technology and buy cheap cargoes that could not be sold in France, Germany and the rest of the European Community. They will bring the food here, irradiate it and sell it on our supermarket shelves. There will be no way in which environmental health officers or anyone else could rule out such an abuse.

The Government should listen to public opinion. Earlier, my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams), who is a former Minister responsible for consumer affairs, talked about the consumers' interests. Before the debate this evening I read the latest brief from the Consumers Association. It is implacably

[Mr. Williams]

opposed to food irradiation. I have also received a letter from my local authority asking me to vote against it. That opposition is shared by the National Farmers Union, the National Federation of Women's Institutes and the big supermarket chains. We should follow the lead of the European Parliament, which voted 4:1 against irradiation.

The Government have demonstrated that their green credentials, such as they are, are in tatters. They support nuclear power and the nuclear industry right through to the irradiation of food.

In Brussels today the Secretary of State for the Environment has gone against the rest of Europe, which wants to control CO^2 emissions by 2000. We have done nothing about flue gas desulphurisation or acid rain—not one of our power stations has been cleaned up. During the Whitsun recess we heard the scares about the beaches at Blackpool and elsewhere because of sewage pollution. Thanks to the Government, another product of our times is toxic algae. Above all, the Tories have given us the disease bovine spongiform encephalopathy—*[Interruption.]* It is a Tory disease because it was caused by the changes to the rendering industry introduced by the Government.

If the Government proceed with the introduction of irradiated food, frankly it will be just another nail in their coffin.

Mr. Churchill (Davyhulme): Nobody disputes that it is the right of the consumer to have access to safe, wholesome food, but the housewife already has a terrible battle finding such food for her family.

The problems with beef have already been rehearsed in respect of BSE and potential problems arising from the outfall of radiation from Chernobyl. There are also potential dangers from scrapie in lamb. The shellfish off our north-east coast cannot be consumed now because of toxic algae, and fish from the North sea are increasingly diseased. Eggs are subject to salmonella. Fruit and vegetables are increasingly sprayed with toxins and preservatives. Many of them are applied outside this country, so the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has no control over their use. The housewife is left in absolute ignorance as to their use and their effect. Those problems will be added to by the introduction of the process of irradiation, which has not been proved safe when used on food for human consumption.

The public are also entitled to clear labelling, and I welcome the Government's commitment to introduce such labelling for irradiated foodstuffs. In the absence of any tests to establish whether food has been irradiated at all, or more than once, it makes it almost impossible to monitor shops and restaurants to ensure that they honour the Government's labelling code.

There is no demand from any significant section of the population for the introduction of irradiated food. Many responsible national bodies have expressed their opposition to it, including the Consumers Association, the British Medical Association, the National Federation of Women's Institutes, the Institution of Environmental Health Officers and the National Federation of Meat Traders.

The Minister and the Parliamentary Secretary have made it clear that it is their opinion, based on the authority of their experts, that there is no evidence of any harmful effects from irradiated food. I absolutely and unequivocally accept that, but I am sure that they will concede that that is far from stating that irradiated food is safe for human consumption. Might one not have said exactly the same two or three years ago about the possibility of a scrapie-like disease being passed on to beef cattle and other species which had been fed the ground bones of animals, including diseased sheep? Is it not those very same experts, on whom Ministers now rely for their expert advice, who bear responsibility for the present situation? Until about three years ago they believed that it was perfectly safe and acceptable for the ground bones of diseased animals to be fed to herbivores, such as beef cattle. That has led us to the present disaster; a blight has been put on the entire British beef industry. Are not those experts the same ones who are now advising MAFF on irradiated food? That should give us cause not to fall too deeply into the hands of experts, but to approach the matter with a healthy degree of caution.

6.15 pm

I am suggesting not that it is unsafe for humans to consume irradiated foodstuffs, but merely that no one knows for sure one way or the other. My right hon. Friend has been unable to advance any proof of safety. The scientific community is sharply divided on this issue and some suspect that it may prove harmful. The fact is that no one knows. Surely the path of caution is the only sensible course for the Government to take.

Little is known about the chemical changes and consequent potential effect of irradiating food treated with modern pesticides, hormones, chemicals and other food additives—let alone about the effect on the packaging that surrounds those foods. Little is known about the effect of irradiation on the nutritional value of food and the vitamins that it contains.

Mr. Nicholas Bennett (Pembroke): My hon. Friend has said that science is divided on this, but as far as I am aware 35 countries have approved the irradiation of food as well as the World Health Organisation, the United States Food and Drugs Administration and our Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes. Can my hon. Friend tell me about those scientists who are against irradiation?

Mr. Churchill: Several countries have refused to endorse the irradiation of food. Australia, after a two-year in-depth study, imposed a three-year moratorium on the importation, sale or production of irradiated foodstuffs. Many other countries and many states in the United States have imposed such bans.

The way in which some of the evidence is used by those who want to ram irradiated food down our throats is especially disturbing. Some of the evidence is based on a misrepresentation of the facts. One such example is the data summary produced by the joint expert committee of the Food and Agriculture Organisation, the International Atomic Energy Agency and the World Health Organisation. That summary appears, either accidentally or deliberately, to misrepresent the conclusion arrived at by the international food irradiation project conducted in Karlsruhe in West Germany. It stated that, apart from the general effect of including spices in the diet of animals,

"no other treatment-related findings were observed and no differences between irradiated spice or non-irradiated spice-fed animals were seen in any of the findings."

That piece of evidence which the committee called in aid arrived at a totally different conclusion. The interim report published in the international food irradiation project series by the Karlsruhe group showed that rats fared less well on a diet which included spices than on a diet without spices, but that it was possible to feed a high-spiced diet as the basis of investigating toxicological problems with irradiated spices.

The final, unpublished report covers the comparison of animals fed diets including irradiated and non-irradiated spices and says in its conclusion:

"Irradiation of spices by 1·5 Mrad shows an increased effect in reducing food intake and body weight. This means that irradiation causes a change in chemical composition of spices which has an influence on animals even at the 2 per cent. level."

In other words, there is an observable effect associated with the irradiation of spices, even at the lowest level at which spices were included in the diet of rats—the 2 per cent. level.

In view of the weight attached by the Government to the World Health Organisation report, one is bound to wonder whether the whole question of the database on which it was founded needs re-examining, for there was a specific case of either oversight or misrepresentation.

The irradiation of food is clearly no panacea. As has been pointed out, it cannot deal effectively with salmonella in eggs or with the problem of listeria in paté and it cannot destroy toxins such as botulism. What, then, is the purpose of introducing regulations that will allow the irradiation of food? What foods need to be irradiated, anyway? There are two answers: first, food that is of dubious hygiene; and, secondly, to extend the shelf life of food which otherwise within a matter of days would become unfit for human consumption.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): Will my hon. Friend concede that in the case of spices, where the chemical process will no longer be available—it will be illegal—irradiation is the only alternative?

Mr. Churchill: No, because the principal importers of spices have pioneered and developed an alternative means of providing for the hygiene of spices involving a process of steam pasteurisation. They claim that that is preferable to, and as satisfactory as, irradiation. Indeed, the Government have time and again cited the irradiation of spices as being the prime reason for introducing legislation —to enable spices to be rendered hygienic without going through the present process involving chemicals that are carcinogenic to those who apply them. That is an added reason why there is neither urgency nor need for the proposed regulations.

I endorse the view of the Marks and Spencer technical executive who said:

"If food is already safe, as we believe it is, in our shops, there is no need for this extra process."

Food irradiation will be seized on by those at the bottom end of the food industry—the cowboys of the market—to make saleable otherwise unsaleable food. I am amazed that the Government should wish to go along with such a process.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby), who is no longer in his place, said he could tell a good prawn from a bad one. He cited the great cost of the process of irradiation. I draw attention to the 1986 case involving Young's prawns, questions about which the Minister did not answer satisfactorily in Committee or at an earlier stage.

The Young's prawns were unmarketable in this country and were sent back to Holland to be irradiated. Those involved in that scandal were obviously not bothered about the cost of irradiation because they knew that the consignment they had on their hands was valueless as it stood and that it was well worth paying for irradiation so that the goods could be brought back and marketed in the United Kingdom. I wonder whether my hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West would have been able, with his undoubtedly sensitive nose, to detect the quality of those prawns, particularly if they had been frozen or wrapped in other packaging.

The case for irradiated foodstuffs has not been made out, at any rate not for food for human consumption, and the Government are taking unnecessary risks with public health. It will give me no pleasure to vote against the Government. I shall have no choice but to do so unless the Minister gives an undertaking to defer introducing the regulations until the European Community has reached a judgment on the matter. If he gives that undertaking, I shall with pleasure join him in the Division Lobby.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I give credit to the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) for urging the Goverment time and again to tread the path of caution on this issue. But I fear that his warning will go unheeded today, as it has until now, because it would be inconvenient for the Government to take his advice. They need to pretend to the public that they are tackling the multiple food problems that have arisen since the Conservatives took power. Irradiation is that step, their excuse, when they should be taking proper action.

As my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) said, irradiation will do nothing to counter the problems of botulism, listeria, BSE, salmonella and the toxins that account for much food poisoning. It will not clean up contaminated food. It will simply dangerously disguise that contamination.

I fear that Ministers, supporters of irradiation and those who are trying to sell certain produce will fool people into believing that irradiation is a worthwhile process from the health point of view. Nothing of the sort has been proved. In any event, it is being introduced not for health reasons but for profit reasons.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food said in a speech on 1 March, repeated in a MAFF press release, that opposition to irradiation was

"a torrent of pseudo-science."

With that statement he discounted all the opposition that had come from the Consumers Association, the National Federation of Women's Institutes, the BMA, food producers and retailers, the National Federation of Meat Traders and from public health organisations such as the Farm and Food Society, the London Food Commission and the Institution of Environmental Health Officers. He discounted the findings of the Cantox committee of the Canadian Parliament which said that there were some unresolved questions. His own Advisory Committee on Irradiated and Novel Foods said that further research was needed in many areas. But the Minister said that that was all a torrent of pseudo-science.

6.30 pm

What science have we had from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food? It has presented no proof that irradiation is safe and has carried out no work. What research has been carried out into thermo-luminescence? The Ministry has not even waited for conclusions, but is presenting to Parliament a measure that will allow food to be irradiated without restriction. Allowing such as measure to go ahead is what I would call pseudo-science.

The Ministry has not carried out any checks on the effects of packaging. Few packaging materials have been tested and some people have said that some packaging materials might migrate to the food or that the food itself might undergo changes and become carcinogenic. There have been no tests on the effects of irradiation or pesticides on food additives. There is a great deal of confusion about labelling. The EEC proposes two labels. One would say that the food was irradiated and the other would say that it was treated by ionising radiation. That is a recipe for confusion and the public will not know where they are.

There is no test to determine whether a product has been irradiated and there is certainly no control on the extent of irradiation that takes place. That will not appear on labels. Unscrupulous people in the food industry will not affix a label even if the food is irradiated. It will not be possible to check such action and therefore it will go unpunished. That is the real response to the argument about choice. What choice is there for the consumer in such cases?

My last point is in many ways about class. The worst foods go to the poorest people in Britain who end up paying higher prices than they should. Irradiated food will be cheaper than fresh, untarnished and non-irradiated food, but people can buy only what they can afford and will buy food that is at the end of its shelf life and is bacteriologically unsound. Irradiation kills the nutrients and vitamins that are crucial to people's diet. It will worsen the diet. The Tories are trail-blazers for worst practice in the food industry and irradiation is another example. It will lead to a serious slackening in food hygiene and a poorer diet.

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): We have heard another powerful speech from my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen). It was one in a series of such speeches from the Opposition which have shown unanimous and forceful opposition to irradiation. The Opposition are under no illusion. If the new clause is accepted, it will mean that the Government will not be able to introduce measures approving of irradiation. If the clause is defeated, it will be tantamount to a vote in favour of irradiation.

All the arguments that have been presented about the rights of the consumer, the possible weakening of the confidence of the consumer in the British food industry and the protection of public health will be swept to one side if the new clause is defeated. There is no doubt that the public are greatly concerned, as are manufacturers, food producers and retailers, about the consequences of irradiation. Serious questions are being asked about the scope and validity of the scientific verification of irradiation. That has been recognised by most hon. Members.

The hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) made an honest and courageous speech in which he considered all the arguments, just as he did on Second Reading. I applaud his integrity in saying that he intends to join us in the Lobby, but I am disappointed that such integrity is not shared by some of his hon. Friends who have considerable reservations about irradiation. On Second Reading they demonstrated those reservations. The hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory), who I am sure will shortly be back in his place, intervened on Second Reading. He said:

> "My right hon. Friend says that there is no distinction between a product that is pasteurised and one that is irradiated. I fully take his point about labelling and the importance of that, but scientists are able to undertake a test to show that a product has been pasteurised. How can he, with hand on heart, promote irradiated foods when, in the event of a court case, there will be no test to show whether the product has been irradiated? That invalidates the fundamentals of his argument"—[*Official Report*, 8 March 1990; Vol. 168, c. 1029.]

Those are strong words. The hon. Gentleman did not say that the balance of judgment was one way or the other but spoke about the fundamentals of the argument being invalidated. The hon. Gentleman has undergone something of a conversion because he now says that we must question the reliability of the tests. He knows, and I am sure that the Minister will confirm, that it is not a question of testing the validity of the tests or their reliability; there is no test. The way in which the hon. Member for York destroyed the Minister's argument on 8 March holds true today.

The hon. Member for York was not alone on Second Reading, because the hon. Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) said that people should know what they are eating. The hon. Member for Medway (Dame P. Fenner) was forceful in her condemnation. I remind the House that the hon. Lady is a former Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and has certainly canvassed the arguments. She said:

> "There is still public concern about what we accept as the evidence of the experts and the qualified scientists."

That point was made by the hon. Member for Davyhulme. The hon. Lady went on:

> "My right hon. Friend will have to take account of the public perception. It may be an erroneous perception, but we still have to deal with it; we cannot bulldoze it."—[*Official Report*, 8 March 1990; Vol. 168, c.1041.]

Those are wise words and I should have thought that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, after its bruising experiences in the last couple of weeks when it realised that it had lost public confidence on the matter of scientific judgments, would have learnt that lesson. Unfortunately it has not. It says that the scientists have said that it is all right. As my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) has said, the Ministry is discriminating about how it accepts scientific advice. If it fits the Ministry's preconditions it is infallible, but if it does not fit those preconditions or the political agenda the Ministry chooses to ignore it. I shall develop that point later.

The House must address several key arguments. First, the case for irradiation has not been put. I hope that the Minister will put it. It was not put on Second Reading and the need for irradiation has not been established. As many of my hon. Friends have said, if food is wholesome, properly stored and handled and consumed within the appropriate time irradiation is not needed.

If there are problems in our food industry they will not be remedied by a quick fix at the end of the process. We must make sure that the food production and handling

processes are themselves remedied. I compliment the Government on some parts of the Bill which address that problem. Irradiation will not clean up the food chain, but will allow a quick fix for a contaminated product at the end of a faulty chain. That is the crux of the argument.

My hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) is an authority on safety. I know that he has followed the debate closely, and doubtless he will be reading my comments in *Hansard* tomorrow, as he is not here. There are major questions about the safety of the process and the impact that it has on irradiated food. We know that there are toxic residues. My hon. Friend the Member for South Shields said that no research has been done into the impact of the process of irradiation on the pesticides residues that might be in some processed food that are then wrapped in cellophane, or other, new, products.

Mr. Ashby: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Davies: No. The hon. Gentleman made a long speech and I do not have time to give way.

We know that irradiation does not provide immunity to listeria and that there are inherent dangers in creating a vacuum. The destruction of the microbiological life creates a vacuum and, if a product is then subjected to secondary contamination, such secondary contamination will grow at a pace that we cannot comprehend, making the product even more dangerous than it would have been had it not been irradiated.

The Minister's response to all this is that we must rely on the scientists. They will have it right, they have done their tests and they are always infallible. That amuses me when I consider the Minister in charge of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. I presume that his philosophy is that scientists are always infallible except on Sundays, because on Sundays there is a higher authority. It seems that we have to rely on the Bible when making choices about eating habits, and it tells us that vegetarianism is an unnatural practice. I have heard some unscientific statements but that takes the unirradiated biscuit.

Let us have a look at the Government's record in accepting scientific advice. They were told that the proposal for a ban on the sale of green top milk—untreated milk—was supported by the enforcement authorities, scientists and a number of other expert organisations, particularly those concerned with public health. What was the Government's response? For political reasons, they decided to ignore the scientists' advice.

Among other things, the Tyrrell committee recommended a survey of the brains of cattle sent to slaughter, to monitor the incidence of unrecognised infection by BSE, and the examination of the relative susceptibility of calves to BSE. The Government had gathered together qualified scientifists under the chairmanship of Tyrrell to give them recommendations on research priorities, but, because it was politically inconvenient to accept those recommendations, they were pushed to one side. The same thing happened with the Richmond committee which made a great many recommendations about microbiological contamination which the Government rejected.

The Farm Animal Welfare Council is composed of experts. They are qualified people—vets, and people concerned with public health and animal welfare. They are all handpicked by the Government for their expertise, scientific qualifications and experience in their chosen field. Of its 51 scientific recommendations, only 18 are to be implemented, while the rest are sacrificed because they do not fit the Government's political agenda.

6.45 pm

This is all a bit rich when consumers are increasingly suspecting the Government's honesty in their handling of these matters. Well-verified surveys show that 65 per cent. of the public believe that the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food cannot be relied on to tell them the truth about food safety. It is no wonder that they suspect the Ministry or that, with that track record, they do not want irradiation.

There is no consumer pressure for irradiation and retailers such as Asda, Budgen, the Co-op, Gateway, Iceland Frozen Foods, Littlewoods, Londis, Marks and Spencer, Spar, Tesco and Waitrose are all opposed to it. The National Farmers Union is also opposed to it, as is the National Federation of Women's Institutes. Why are the Government hellbent on driving this legislation through, against all informed opinion and against the abundant reservations felt by Tory Back Benchers? It defies logic. There is no pressure from Europe, and the European Parliament has voted to oppose irradiation. Increasingly, all the pressure is to reduce the amount of irradiation allowed. There have been many powerful arguments against the proposal.

The Government's defence is that the public will have a choice, but that argument was destroyed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams). There can be no choice, because there is no diagnostic test, and without such a test the Government and the public health authorities cannot monitor or check whether food has been irradiated. Even if they could check, they would not be able to bring any prosecutions because there would be no evidence without a diagnostic test. If one cannot enforce legislation or prosecute, how can the Minister say that there will be a choice for consumers?

Fortunately, the new clause offers the House a choice. I hope that those Tory Members who share our view will exercise their choice and vote for the new clause.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Maclean): It was a shame that the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) went a bit over the top and spoiled a rather interesting debate. He continued to say what has been said by Labour Members many times, and gave us the same old myth that the Government regard this as a panacea or as a silly quick fix, or that they are in a terrible hurry to introduce irradiation. This must be one of the slowest quick fixes in history. The food irradiation process was invented in 1902, but only in 1982 did the British Government begin to consider it, setting up an independent expert advisory committee to examine the matter.

The committee took five years to study the process, although the World Health Organisation, the Food and Agriculture Organisation, the Americans and the EC had been looking into the matter. Hundreds of expert committees had examined it. In 1987, the committee reported. The Government did not automatically accept its view. They had some queries, and sent the report back,

[Mr. David Maclean]

and it was not until last year that the committee again reported. That is why we have felt it perfectly reasonable to bring in the necessary changes that will allow us, after consultation and after formal regulations have been made, to go ahead with irradiation in certain cases.

We have heard an awful lot of what irradiation cannot do, as if that was something fatal in its character. We heard that it cannot remove toxins in the food. We know that is true. It cannot remove botulism, it cannot make the coffee and it cannot hoover the carpet, but none of us has suggested that it could do all these wonderful things. We have merely said that it has a small useful part to play if consumers and the industry want to use it, along with the deep freezing techniques, the techniques for canning peas and drying mashed potato and other food processing techniques. We think that this process should be made available if people want to use it, because we believe that it is safe, and all the expert evidence from around the world believes that it is safe.

The ridiculous statement has been made that, if one irradiates something and kills off bugs, thereby creating a vacuum, the bugs grow more prolifically in the vacuum. That is unscientific gobbledegook. Irradiation is not like pulling a few thistles out of a garden and leaving more room for the weeds to grow; bacteriologically it does not work in that way, and it is nonsense to suggest it.

The hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) cast doubts on the World Health Organisation, and quoted others for his purpose. He should quote the World Health Organisation itself, and listen to what its director general has said. He said:

"WHO is satisfied regarding the safety of irradiating any food commodity up to an overall average dose of 10 kilograys."

It would be difficult to find a blunter statement than that. Golden rule number one of the World Health Organisation's "Golden Rules for Safe Food Preparation" says:

"if you have the choice, select fresh or frozen poultry treated with ionising radiation."

We have not heard much about that tonight.

The hon. Member for Truro quoted the European Parliament as if it were an expert on the matter. However, he did not quote expert advisory committees from around the world, or even the independent committee advising the British Government. It is unworthy of him to come to the House and pretend that the opinions of politicians—in any part of the world—are equal to the opinions of expert scientific committees.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Maclean: No. I have little time, as the Opposition want me to finish by 7 o'clock.

I have great respect for the views of environmental health officers, trading standards officers and the National Farmers Union. However, I do not think that anyone would suggest that they are among the world's experts on the techniques of ionising radiation.

Tonight we have heard what Opposition Members consider to be the most damning indictment of irradiation —their erroneous allegation that all around the world other countries are backtracking. Australia was quoted. The Australian Government have announced a moratorium, but it was not based on the views of an expert scientific committee of leading microbiologists, toxicologists and experts on radiation, physics and nutrition who all agreed that irradiation was safe. My hon. Friends may be interested to hear that the moratorium was prompted by the recommendations of the House of Representatives' Standing Committee on the Environment, Recreation and the Arts. That is the Les Patterson approach to Government policy; we shall base our policy on firmer grounds.

Mr. Churchill: Does my hon. Friend accept that that committee, which conducted an in-depth survey over two years, took a good deal of evidence from many highly qualified scientific expert advisers?

Mr. Maclean: I accept that. Any political committee in any House of Commons or House of Representatives throughout the world would do the same. However, it was essentially a political decision, made for political reasons and not based on science or safety.

The main point that I wish to make concerns the question whether the Americans are backing down on irradiation. The right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) said that, in the United States, herbs and spices were irradiated, but not chicken. Therefore, he asked, what was the point of it? In his view, that was proof that irradiation was dangerous. He is slightly out of date. On 1 May this year, the United States Food and Drug Administration—which is highly respected, and whose lead we are urged to follow—in many areas—after careful evaluation of toxicity studies, reports on microbiological considerations and nutritional studies, authorised the irradiation of fresh and frozen poultry meat in addition to the other products for which the process is permitted. The pressure came not from industry or from capitalists who wanted to irradiate chickens, but from the food safety and inspection service of the United States Government. It thought that that would constitute

"an important public health benefit."

It is noteworthy that food irradiation in the United States has the support of not only the Food and Drug Administration and the United States Department of Agriculture, but the American Medical Association, the Council of Agricultural Science and Technology, the American Council on Science and Health and others.

The right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams), like some of my hon. Friends, was concerned about monitoring. The regulatory controls that we plan to introduce will amount to the close and detailed control that the public will expect to be imposed if we go ahead. Our proposals for controls are based on EC discussions, and on a study of the regulations in more than 20 countries that already operate controls.

First, no one will be able to undertake irradiation in Britain without a full and detailed prior inspection by highly trained experts, capable of assessing ability to carry out the process correctly. Secondly, those who undertake it will be subject to detailed conditions on all aspects of their business, which will be set out in a formal licence. Thirdly, they will be restricted to treating the foods stipulated in the licence and to the doses specified therein for the irradiation objectives for which they have received official approval. Fourthly, they will be required to keep detailed records of all aspects of their business. Fifthly, they will be subject to inspection at any time. Sixthly, they

will be subject to microbiological testing to confirm suitability for treatment. Finally—as we have said many times—there will be comprehensive labelling, which will apply to restaurants as well. The controls that the Government have planned are in line with those recommended by the Codex Alimentarius Commission, and are included in EC proposals in the draft directive.

Some hon. Members were concerned about enforcement. Specialist inspectors within central Government are already familiar with the work involved in inspecting irradiation premises, and local authority officers have great experience in the enforcement of food hygiene provisions. We are well placed to police the systems effectively.

Mention has been made tonight of the Dutching technique. The impression was given that every day loads of prawns or other illegal consignments were going around the world. There is only one example of that—Young's, in 1985. It was contrary to the rules, and we condemn anyone who breaks the rules, but it is not right for the Opposition to give the impression that there is a Dutching industry.

My hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) asked about a test. Of course, no viable test has yet been devised anywhere in the world. However, both the WHO and the Codex Alimentarius Commission are satisfied that adequate controls can be imposed on the basis of documentary checks. An adequate detection test is not regarded as essential to a rigorous and adequate control system.

I must say to my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme—to whose contribution I listened with great interest and respect—that irradiation is not the only food process for which there is no detection test. Documentation is relied on for verification in the case of food produced by organic methods, meat derived from animal slaughter by ritual procedures and date stamps on products; there are no magic detection tests in those instances. We believe that they are not necessary in the case of irradiated food either, although they will be a worthwhile bonus when they come along.

The hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) ruined his case by being ridiculous and trying to scare us. He is a scientist, but he told the House that irradiation was so dangerous that if a human being was put on an irradiation conveyor belt and shoved through the irradiation plant it would destroy all the genes in his body. I bet it would. If we shoved people on the pea-canning conveyor that would destroy all the genes in their body as well; if they were stuck in an Aga for two hours that would also kill them. That is the ridiculous level to which the hon. Member for Carmarthen and others have sunk.

My hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme asked for the database to be checked. I assure him that the database is checked constantly. No subject has been examined more exhaustively than irradiation, and it will continue to be examined. I fear that he misquoted me, so I must put the matter right. I do not think that there is no evidence that irradiation is unsafe: all the evidence is that it is safe. That is positive. I refer my hon. Friend to the House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities, which said in the first of the conclusions in its summary:

"The overwhelming weight of evidence is that irradiation of food, on the limited basis proposed by the Commission, is safe."

7 pm

We have consistently maintained that irradiation is but one of the processes that we think have a beneficial use in food processing techniques. It is certainly not a panacea, and my right hon. and hon. Friends do not suggest that it is. There will be full and comprehensive labelling and monitoring to ensure compliance with the rules. Irradiation is backed as a safe process by all the expert committees in the world that have considered the matter. The scientific community is not divided. We have the backing of the World Health Organisation, the Food and Agriculture Organisation, the Food and Drug Administration, the EC expert committee and the British Government's independent committee.

I give the House the assurance that it is not the end of the matter—irradiation will not be introduced when we vote against the Opposition's new clause. Irradiation can be brought in only when the Government come before the House with detailed regulations, having had a period of consultation. Then, and only then, will the House make a final decision.

If all the irradiation plants in the world were uprooted tomorrow and brought to England, they would only irradiate a maximum capacity of less than 2 per cent. of our food. It is nonsense for the Opposition to suggest that we will be swamped with irradiated food. We are entitled to give the same choice to the 5, 10, 15 or 20 per cent. of our population as the French housewife has at this very moment. She can buy irradiated food in supermarkets in France. If it is good enough for the French housewife, British housewives should have the same right in the choice of food. I urge the House to reject the new clause.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 177, Noes 223.

Division No. 227] **[7.02 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry *(Derbyshire NE)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. F. *(D'nt'n & R'dish)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Ron *(Edinburgh Leith)*
Buckley, George J.
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ron *(Blyth Valley)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alex *(Mont'g)*
Carr, Michael
Churchill, Mr
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clay, Bob
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Crowther, Stan
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham Hodge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Doran, Frank
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs Gwyneth
Eadie, Alexander
Ewing, Mrs Margaret *(Moray)*
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, Terry *(L'pool B G'n)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Flynn, Paul
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Fraser, John
Galloway, George
Garrett, John *(Norwich South)*
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John

Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heal, Mrs Sylvia
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Ms Kate *(Vauxhall)*
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Geraint
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, John *(Coventry NE)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kennedy, Charles
Leadbitter, Ted
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Livsey, Richard
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum A.
McKay, Allen *(Barnsley West)*
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Mrs Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Nellist, Dave
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L.
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George
Robinson, Geoffrey
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(Monk'ds E)*
Smith, J. P. *(Vale of Glam)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomas, Dr Dafydd Elis
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watson, Mike *(Glasgow, C)*
Welsh, Andrew *(Angus E)*
Welsh, Michael *(Doncaster N)*
Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Williams, Alan W. *(Carm'then)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert N. Wareing and Mrs. Llin Golding.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Amos, Alan
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Tom *(Hazel Grove)*
Ashby, David
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Nicholas *(Pembroke)*
Benyon, W.
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Dr Sir Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, Michael *(Brigg & Cl't's)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset South)*
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John, *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon Alan *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre F'rest)*
Cope, Rt Hon John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Davies, Q. *(Stamf'd & Spald'g)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatf'd)*
Evennett, David
Fallon, Michael
Fishburn, John Dudley
Fookes, Dame Janet
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Glyn, Dr Sir Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony *(CambsSW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Ground, Patrick
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, A. *(B'ham H'll Gr')*
Hargreaves, Ken *(Hyndburn)*
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Christopher
Hayes, Jerry
Hayward, Robert
Hicks, Mrs Maureen *(Wolv' NE)*
Hicks, Robert *(Cornwall SE)*
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'd-on-A)*
Howarth, G. *(Cannock & B'wd)*
Hughes, Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irvine, Michael
Irving, Sir Charles
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert
Janman, Tim
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lawrence, Ivan
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Sir Ian *(Havant)*
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Maclean, David
Mans, Keith
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Miller, Sir Hal
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Morrison, Sir Charles
Moss, Malcolm
Moynihan, Hon Colin
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shephard, Mrs G. *(Norfolk SW)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andy *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon Ian *(Herts N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Summerson, Hugo
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, D. *(Calder Valley)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter

Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Dr. Mike
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Nicholas Baker and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

Question accordingly negatived.

New Clause 2

FINANCE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

'.—(1) This section shall have effect for securing the effective implementation of the duties conferred under this Act.

(2) The Ministers shall, within one month of the passing of this Act, lay before Parliament a report setting out their estimates of the resources likely to be required by food authorities in the financial year 1991-92 for the purposes of the carrying out of their functions under this Act.

(3) The Ministers shall before the commencement of any financial year consult organisations representative of food authorities before the announcement of any plans for public expenditure in respect of that year as to the estimated cost in that year of the maintenance and improvement of food standards in their areas, including the cost of staffing, training, and the provision and maintenance of adequate laboratory facilities or access thereto.

(4) The Ministers shall satisfy themselves generally that the resources available to food authorities are adequate to secure the proper carrying out by them of their functions under this section.'.—*[Mr. Ron Davies.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Ron Davies: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

New clause 2 seeks to ensure the effective implementation of the Bill. It is worth putting it on record that the Opposition did not oppose the Bill on Second Reading and that in Committee we were at pains to press the Government on a series of points which we thought were necessary to ensure the effective implementation of the measures that we support.

New clause 2 explores the financial arrangements and, in particular, seeks to ensure that Parliament is aware of the full cost to local authorities of the Bill's implementation, to ensure that local authorities are consulted and to provide specifically that Ministers are satisfied that the resources that they make available are adequate to meet the demands of implementation.

It emerged strongly in Committee that the Bill does not place duties on local authorities to enforce the measures in the Bill; rather it gives powers to local authorities to exercise their discretion. That is not a principle with which we would necessarily disagree, but we recognise that if powers rather than duties are given to local authorities serious questions are raised about how one ensures that those powers are adequately enforced.

7.15 pm

It is worth drawing to the attention of the House that there is no mechanism within the Bill, within the financial arrangements, or within the Department of the Environment, which presumably will be the Department which ensures a flow of money from the Government to local authorities, to require action to be taken by local authorities in the event of deficiencies being identified in the food industry within their area of responsibility. Nor is there any mechanism to ensure that the resources that are made available are used for the purpose for which they have been earmarked—food safety. There is no mechanism in the Bill to ensure the monitoring of the way in which local authorities discharge the duties contained in the Bill. That is a serious omission.

The Government may be able to convince me of the error of my ways, but the Minister did not strike me as being particularly on form when he assured us tonight that what was good for French consumers was good for British consumers. However, we may want to explore that later. If the Minister can convince me that adequate systems are in place to ensure the proper implementation of the measure, I will be happy.

I was a member of a local authority for about 15 years before I was elected to Parliament, and as a result of that and my relationship with local authority officers since I know that no finger of criticism can be pointed at those who are responsible for inspecting food. On the contrary, it is obvious that they have been anxious to expand the monitoring of food and the scope and nature of their work. But they continually tell me that, no matter how diligent or keen they are to discharge those responsibilities, they are always hamstrung by the lack of finance from Government.

Local authorities frequently have to decide whether to employ people in their environmental health departments to monitor food establishments and carry out other duties. They have to judge whether to allocate resources to public health, housing, social services, welfare, leisure or a range of other responsibilities that local authorities have. I hope that the new clause will allow us to explore some of those questions.

On Second Reading, the Government made great play of the fact that about £30 million was being made available. On Second Reading and in Committee the Minister was quizzed about the financial arrangements. We wanted to know whether the notional £30 million would be hard cash. He said that the £30 million would be taken into account in the revenue support grant settlement. We asked whether it would be new money—whether the existing money would be put to one side and a new calculation made based on the additional responsibilities that local authorities will have costing £30 million, and then £30 million added to the local authorities' existing resources. If so, that would mean a real increase in local authority resources. Local authorities across the land would be able to say when fixing their budgets, "We have an additional £50,000"—or £100,000 or £150,000, or £200,000—"from central Government in cash terms. We have more money this year than last year, so we can now implement the measures contained in the Food Safety Bill."

We raised that matter several times in Committee. The Minister may recall his remarks on 22 March. I know that relations between the Department of Health and MAFF are a little strained just now, because they have a different understanding of their respective responsibilities in food safety measures. I do not blame the Department of Health in its current subterranean attempts to impinge on the responsibilities of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): We are the best of friends.

Mr. Davies: I was not referring to individual Ministers because you and I both know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the real battle was going on between the Secretary of State for Health and the Ministry of Agriculture. That was clearly instanced when the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food came to the House to fight for his political life over the BSE issue, and the Secretary of State for Health was not to be seen. The right hon. and learned Gentleman was not going to come here to lend his support to the Minister but wanted to dissociate himself entirely.

In the light of the interesting development in the relationship between the Department of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—I am not sure that I would call it constructive tension—the Parliamentary Secretary said in Committee:

"We have made the allocation of £30 million. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health made matters clear."

One assumes that he had made matters clear beyond doubt, and that there could be no further argument. The Minister continued:

"I understand the Opposition's scepticism about whether it is new or old money or funny money, as the hon. Member for Carlisle suggested."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee B*, 22 March 1990; c. 49.]

But matters had not been made very clear if the Minister had to add:

"I understand the Opposition's scepticism about whether it is new or old money or funny money".

That is at the heart of the amendment.

For the purposes of tonight's debate, let us give the Minister the benefit of the doubt and assume that £30 million of additional money will be available. That is a dubious prospect because of the way in which central Government calculate how they make money available to local authorities, through the standard spending assessment. That is done every year according to the importance that the Government attach to the different responsibilities of local authorities—so £1 given for environmental protection this year could be £1·20 next year, or perhaps only 80p. I do not necessarily disagree with that practice because it is a perfectly proper way for Government to influence local authorities, by giving an indication of priorities on a year-to-year basis.

If we received a firm undertaking from the Ministry that there would be no accounting sleight of hand, I would be happy. In fact, the Ministry will provide £30 million notionally to implement the Bill—but when the Government conduct their weighting exercise and decide their priorities in other areas of local authority responsibility, at the end of the day the amount of cash that local authorities are given will not be equal to the sum they received last year, plus an amount to take account of inflation, plus a percentage of the £30 million. On the contrary, even with the measures that the Government will take to extricate themselves from the poll tax fiasco, the amount of cash that local authorities receive will be substantially less.

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): My hon. Friend is far too kind to the Minister. In calculating the standard spending assessment, the Department of the Environment, in conjunction with the Minister, takes no real account of any additional obligations placed on local authorities. My local authority has been poll tax-capped for additional expenditure relating to the implementation of the National Health Service and Community Care Bill from 1 April 1991. What position will the Minister adopt if my local authority takes steps to make allowance in its budget for next year resources for the implementation of the Food Safety Bill and again finds itself falling foul of the Department of the Environment? Will he ring-fence and protect my local authority?

Mr. Davies: I offer my sincere apologies to my hon. Friend if he thinks that I am being unduly kind to the Minister. It is not for want of trying, but the Minister keeps dodging about. He presents different arguments at different times. Nevertheless, my hon. Friend makes a valid point that is at the heart of the funding relationship between central and local government. My later comments will support my hon. Friend's argument, but if he wants to intervene later or even to make a brief contribution, I am sure that the House would welcome it, particularly since my hon. Friend represents a local authority that is an exemplary illustration of the deficiencies of the poll tax. His local authority is traditionally very responsible and moderate. It has discharged all the duties required of it by central Government and the public. It has never embarked on spending sprees or overshot its targets. It has always tried to comply with Government spending guidelines—but because of the ludicrous inconsistencies of the poll tax, that local authority, with neighbouring local authorities, has been dragged before the Department of the Environment and told that it will be poll tax-capped.

Because of the continual underfunding of local authorities and the impact of the SSA system, there can be no guarantee that money provided for in the Bill will be used for ensuring food safety. In the current year, about 70 per cent. of local authorities in England and Wales are spending above their SSA. I refer not to Labour authorities or to the so-called loony authorities that the Government like to attack. Some are Labour, but some are Conservative. Incidentally, I am glad that we have the continuing presence of the massed ranks of the Liberal and Social Democrats in the form of the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor), having seen off the SDP. I invite the SLD to join us in the next general election in seeing off the Government.

Mr. David Lightbown (Lords Commissioner to the Treasury): Is that the new alternative strategy?

Mr. Davies: I am delighted that we have something rarely seen in this House—a Whip who can actually speak. That is a rare privilege. Having recognised him, no doubt the hon. Gentleman will be appearing in *Hansard* tomorrow. I have no doubt that at half-past 10 or 11 o'clock a message will come through from the Patronage Secretary, and the hon. Gentleman will be called up to the office and invited to explain why Government Whips are now taking part in debates.

Local authorities are spending above their standard spending assessments. They have more commitments than they have resources from central Government and from the local population via the poll tax. That means that local authorities must make judgments and prioritise. Perhaps at the moment they are using money out of the standard spending assessment for the purposes that I mentioned earlier: care for the elderly, sheltered accommodation, meals on wheels, concessionary fares for pensioners, providing leisure facilities or social facilities for the handicapped and day care facilities for the mentally handicapped. Those are the sorts of thing that progressive authorities, whatever their political hue, will do. Now local

authorities are under increasing pressure from central Government. The choice that they will have to make next year, as they did this year and last, is whether to continue to fund such services or whether to use the new powers that they have been given and divert resources from existing services to food safety.

7.30 pm

I am all in favour of allowing local authorities discretion, but that can be meaningful only if they are allowed resources and if they are allowed to provide services over and above the minimum acceptable standards. The impact of successive Government revenue support settlements is that local authorities are having to, and will have to, make hard judgments whether they implement the Bill or continue to provide services for the elderly, the young, the handicapped or people in need. That is a matter of great concern to Opposition Members. We are worried that there is no guarantee that the money will go to individual local authorities. We do not know, and the Government certainly have not told us. They might tell us tonight and I hope that the Minister can offer us an explanation. The Government have not told us what the mechanism will be, and how they will apportion the funds among local authorities. Will they say that inner city authorities, which might have enormous problems during the day because of the wealth of catering establishments, will be given resources to reflect their duties? Rural authorities, which cover many acres and have a low population density and therefore high costs, may have a lot of industry associated with food. Will their problems be accommodated?

There is a mass exodus of population from the inner cities at night, so there is no point in saying that the amount of money will be calculated on the basis of the residential population. An inner city area might have a large number of catering establishments but very few people living there. How will it have the resources to tackle the problems? Those are the questions that we are pressing the Government to answer, and I hope that the Minister will give some sign, when he responds to the debate, of how he proposes to tackle them.

Mr. Martlew: I am sorry to interrupt my hon. Friend in mid-flow. Does he agree that the other worry is that authorities which provide a good service, like my local authority, which has high numbers of environmental health officers, might be penalised and instead money may go to authorities which had neglected food safety in the past? Does he agree that it would be almost criminal if that happened?

Mr. Davis: Absolutely. That gives the lie to two things: first, the Government's commitment to ensuring the implementation of these measures: and, secondly, to their commitment to good democratic local government, because they are penalising local authorities which have done the job that they are there to do.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield said, the Bill transfers the burden of implementing measures—if they are to be implemented—on to the poll tax. If additional services are to be provided, and if local authorities are spending above their standard spending assessment—we know that 70 per cent. of them are—any additional expenditure will fall directly on the poll tax. We know that, due to the multiplier effect, a heavy burden will fall on local authorities. I have no doubt that next year we will have the iniquitous situation of the Government wanting to take local authorities to court, twisting arms and imposing all sorts of poll tax—capping measures. How will local authorities be able to implement the measures contained in the Bill?

The Government say that they will give local authorities the money. But local authorities are spending above their standard spending assessments, so any additional money that they get will be taken up by existing commitments. If they incur new commitments, they will have to add them on to the poll tax and they will immediately be caught by the panoply of measures that the Government will introduce to prevent rises in the poll tax. That that is absolutely unacceptable has been recognised by the local authority associations.

A useful indication of the concern expressed by some local authorities is a note which I received from the Association of Metropolitan Authorities. It says:

"The Government does not provide a detailed breakdown of the individual components of the grant"—

that is, when the revenue support grant settlement is announced—

"it only provides Control (i.e. spending) Totals for each block of services. Environmental health"—

that is the block under which food safety measures will be held—

"comes into the Other Services block in the category of 'Services provided predominantly by district councils'. This covers a rag-bag of services—from Allotments to Registration of Electors—and has a Control total for 1990-91 of £3,891. So, an increase of £30m in the environmental health section would be insignificant and could well be hidden by reductions in other areas. Weasel words such as 'this sum takes account of the increase in spending needed to meet the requirements of the Bill' are used to give the impression that all is well."

All is not well. The Government have to answer some serious questions. We want to know what they are going to do to prevent the burden of implementing the Food Safety Bill from falling on poll tax payers. We want to know whether, when the revenue support grant settlement is announced, the Minister will give a breakdown of how the additional resources, if they exist, will be distributed to local authorities, and how the "Other Services" heading in the AMA briefing will be calculated.

Unless we get satifactory answers to those serious questions, Opposition Members will have no alternative but to conclude that the Government are happy to pass legislation as long as that legislation only gives powers to local authorities rather than places duties upon them. In the absence of money to enforce those powers, the Government cannot be serious about their commitment to food safety.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: The debate is a replay of debates in Committee, and the Labour Front Bench spokesmen have talked at length about exchanges that took place there. The key point is not whether money should be specifically allocated. If we believe in the discretion of local authorities, we should not be arguing that point. The key is the basis on which the calculation is being made and on which the money will get to local authorities so that they can implement the new procedures that the Government are requiring of them.

By saying that £30 million has been allocated, the Government acknowledge that extra expenses will be involved and that they should at least take a share of the

[Mr. Matthew Taylor]

burden—I would hope that they will take the bulk of it—through the grants system. That is what the Minister claims that the Government have done.

The reason why new clause 2 is important, and should be pursued—I hope that the Minister will respond positively, if not to the new clause, at least to the spirit in which it was tabled—is that there must be room for debate about whether the money allocated is sufficient. The House has every reason to expect Ministers to come forward with a much fuller explanation of how they have made that calculation, and how they intend funds to be distributed. The House has every justification in asking for and expecting that, because when Ministers were asked in Committee for the basis of their calculation, they were unable to provide any real explanation.

I challenged the Ministers, saying that their calculations amounted to a guesstimate. There is nothing wrong with that, so long as Ministers are prepared to admit it, but they refused to do so. However, they were not able to offer any explanation or any detail about how they had reached that precise figure and were able to say with apparent authority that they had got it absolutely right and that there could be no question about it. I cannot see any evidence of that and the House should not accept it. It seems to me entirely appropriate that hon. Members should ask the Government—and the new clause is one way of doing that—to explain themselves before local authorities are required to bear the cost of implementing the legislation.

If the Government have got it wrong and are not prepared to justify themselves, other services will suffer. I do not believe that local authorities will wish not to implement the legislation, but that could be at a cost to other services or at great cost to the community charge or poll tax payer. Either of those consequences would prove disreputable, given that the Minister is claiming that he has carried out all the calculations to ensure that that will not be the case. There is no reason for the House to believe him, and if he cannot come up with a better answer than he gave in Committee, he should accept the new clause.

Mr. McCartney: I support the new clause which goes to the heart of whether the Government are serious about the implementation of food safety measures. There is general agreement in the House about the concept and the principles of the Bill. Although Opposition Members consider that it has not gone far enough, at least it makes an effort to set out a way forward from the serious food safety problems that have arisen over the past few years. I am referring not simply to the various outbreaks of salmonella and listeria, but to the large increase in the number of restaurants and take-away establishments in Britain. The growth in food production and related service sector industries has been to the detriment of engineering and other traditional industries.

The largest food processing plant in the world, H. J. Heinz of Kitt Green, is in my constituency. Every time hon. Members eat a tin of beans they should think of me and the town of Wigan. A number of other large companies involved in the production and retail sale of food are based in my constituency. Whenever such an establishment has been set up my local authority has used its resources to ensure that those companies have a clear understanding about the arrangements by which we in Wigan try to maintain high standards of food safety at the point of production and at the point of sale.

However, in the past few years there has been increasing strain on the local authority's ability to maintain those high standards, because central Government have withdrawn resources through grant-related expenditure assessments, the reduction in rate support grant and the introduction of the poll tax. This year alone there has been a reduction of more than £20 million in the Government funding that enables the local authority to run its services. That reduction has occurred precisely when, through this and other Government measures, local authorities are being asked to implement consumer safety legislation.

That legislation has been demanded by the way in which consumers have reacted to food scares and because of their genuine right to ensure that the food that they purchase is as safe as possible. Therefore, if the Government are not prepared to give an absolute commitment to providing local authorities with the necessary resources to implement that legislation, it is essential that we support the new clause.

Staffing and training are essential in the development of codes of practice at local level, working with industry and those involved in the retail sale of food to maintain and improve existing standards. Unfortunately, the high standards in my constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) do not represent the pattern throughout the rest of the country. In many areas there is a lack of resources because of the deliberate policy of local authorities, cuts in expenditure or unwillingness or lack of interest in food safety and consumer safety.

7.45 pm

Local authorities start from a low level of resources to implement the Bill. It is, therefore, vital—if the Government are serious—that they should give a categorical assurance about the level of funding and how that funding will be ring fenced to ensure that the money is used for the purposes set out in the Bill. It would be tragic indeed if local authorities were allocated resources to implement the requirements of the Bill, but, because of pressures on local government resources, the money was used for another purpose and the Bill was not implemented. We cannot allow that to happen, given public attitudes towards food safety. The public will not expect the dragging of feet in the House or at local government level in protection of the production and sale of food.

The Select Committees on Agriculture and on Social Services have considered the implementation of a large number of recommendations to prevent listeria in large supermarkets and small corner shops. The implementation of those recommendations, if approved by the Department of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, will mean that local authorities need substantial additional resources. They will need officers and training to implement those changes. Therefore, the Minister must give a clear undertaking that, in discussions about allocating resources for next year, some money will be set aside specifically for the implementation of the legislation. The Government must take adequate measures to ensure

that new money is provided and that that money is clearly identified or ring fenced to ensure that it is spent on food safety.

I have served on a local authority finance committee and I understand only too well the ability of local authorities—under pressure or otherwise—to change heads of expenditure and to spend resources on other services than those to which they were allocated. We have to ensure that lack of resources due to poll tax capping or the level of poll tax do not force local authorities to spend the money on other services to the detriment of food safety.

The Minister owes it to the House to ensure that new money is provided by the Department of the Environment and that local authorities do not use it to reduce their overall expenditure. The Government must ensure that the legislation is seen as a new and welcome approach to food safety and that local authorities have the resources to get on with the job in the way in which consumers would wish.

Mr. Tony Speller (Devon, North): I take up a point made by the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney). I come from a catering background and I suspect that, despite his connection with Heinz, he does not. Our greatest problem is not to provide lots of money; that is not the answer. Lots of training is the answer. Much holiday catering is done by casual labour and much of the damage is caused through infection by casual labour.

It is fine to talk about laboratories, as new clause 2 does. There are normally adequate laboratory facilities, but we do not have trained and qualified staff. If we are to look for money from the Government, we should first seek a way in which we can train the staff, especially the casual staff, and we should provide a form of certificate of hygiene in food. That would be a step forward.

A greater step forward would be to train the housewife because most damage to health occurs in the home.

Mr. McCartney: For the record, I inform the hon. Gentleman that I have a catering background. At 15, I was trained at the merchant navy national sea training college as a chef. I went to sea and then worked in the hotel trade for several years. I was so poorly paid and exploited by Tory employers that I got out and became a Member of Parliament.

Mr. Speller: That is a fascinating coincidence. I started my training as a commis chef. The pay of a commis chef and then a commis waiter was probably rather lower than the pay of those in the merchant navy, who are not badly paid on the whole.

We need assistance to ensure that the people who do the casual work are properly trained. In London and in the provinces there are many who take up a job for a few days. Within a couple of years, they should not be able to take up those jobs without the certificate of basic food hygiene.

The events of the past few weeks show that we can do things without cash. I have been chairing a working committee of the Mobile and Outside Caterers Association and the environmental health officers. They have been trying to draw up a checklist. Catering for a function is a bit like an airline's job. On an aeroplane, it is the engineer's job to check out the aeroplane and the pilot's job to fly it. They are not contrary to each other. Too often, people assume that the environmental officer is in some way the enemy of the caterer—or vice versa.

I wholly support the Bill, which seeks to bring together all the strands so that we have cleaner and better-presented food. There are a million and one points that I could mention. One can observe outside a supermarket the family collecting the frozen food. It goes into the back of the hot estate wagon and is at a nice boiling temperature by the time it is put back into a freezer cabinet. Training and education will help us far more than vast quantities of money. Money does not solve anything; the application of training might.

Mr. Maclean: New clause 2 would place several requirements on Ministers which are unnecessary and would add nothing worth while to our present system. We have already consulted local authority organisations at some length on resources. Following those consultations, we derived the figure of £30 million as being the annual sum that food authorities would need to carry out the extra tasks that would follow from the Bill. That took account of staffing needs, training, the impact of the Bill and the EC official control of foodstuffs directive.

It was noticeable that from the day that we unveiled the Bill and the notice in the Bill that we would provide an extra £30 million, which rather shot the Opposition's fox because they believed that we would not make available that large extra sum, they have been trying to undermine the favourable reception for the additional funding by suggesting that local authorities will receive far less than that. That is not so. Central Government will provide an extra £30 million for food law enforcement. As has already been pointed out many times, local authority financing is complicated. However, it will be understood from the start of negotiations on the 1991-92 revenue support grant settlements in the autumn that the whole £30 million will be paid by central Government.

We shall also be able to take account of changing circumstances. In the Bill, we have provided for consultation on all the regulation-making powers likely to have a financial impact on local authorities. Local authority associations will thus have a formal opportunity to comment on our detailed proposals. We shall listen carefully to what they have to say on all aspects of the regulations. What is more, the local authority associations can make representations in the normal way in the extensive discussions on spending that we hold each year, culminating in the annual meeting between the associations and the Secretary of State for the Environment.

The hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) said that local authorities were under no obligation to enforce food law and he asked what would happen if they did not. Local authorities have the duty to enforce food law under clause 6(2). There will be codes of practice to assist them in prioritising their work. There are also default powers which will enable the Government to step in and send the bill to the local authority concerned. Our aim, of course, will be not to have to use those powers, but they are contained in clause 43 to be used if necessary.

Ultimately, we need a system that leaves it to local authorities to allocate resources, both from central Government and raised locally, in the right way for their area. If it is now Labour party policy, as espoused by the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney), that we should ring-fence the money and dictate to local authorities how they should spend it, we shall take that as an interesting change in policy. The local authorities will

[Mr. Maclean]

be interested if it is the new Labour party strategy to dictate to them how they shall spend the money in their local areas.

Mr. McCartney: I am surprised that the Minister is not up to date on the issue of ring fencing. It is a method of ensuring that local authorities implement new measures. That idea won the approval of the Select Committees on Agriculture and on Social Services earlier this year, and it was supported by my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench and by the local authority associations. The Government give on the one hand in speeches here and take away with the other hand at meetings at the Department of the Environment. The Minister will have to come up with some better arguments to ensure that my local authority will receive some new money from the Government to enforce food safety legislation.

Mr. Maclean: We have made the point time and again that the £30 million is new money and that it will be paid by central Government. I am merely making the observation—which is interesting to my hon. Friends—that Labour party policy seems to have moved considerably if it is now the view of Labour Members that central Government must dictate to local authorities the areas in which they must spend their money.

We do not intend to dictate to local authorities exactly what they should spend on enforcing food legislation. Local authorities will be duty bound to enforce the law and we shall give them some guidance through codes of practice. I am sure that the House will agree—I invite Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen to agree—that each authority must spend what it believes is right in its own area.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: I agree with the Minister's view on not dictating what local authorities must spend. The Liberal Democrats have always taken that view on local discretion and accountability to the local community. But is the Minister prepared to publish, for the aid of those local communities and of the House, the detailed assumptions on which the figure of £30 million is based in terms of staffing needs and other costs associated with these measures?

Mr. Maclean: No. I have said repeatedly that, having had discussions with some local authorities and their associations, we made a calculation. We stand by the £30 million as being adequate for the new and extra tasks that the Food Safety Bill will impose. I cannot say at this stage —it is not up to me—how the money will be distributed. The allocations to individual authorities will be made some months from now after the usual consultations with local authority associations. Let me repeat—I hope for the final time—that the whole of the £30 million will be paid by central Government.

Having made that point clear, I hope that I have also made it clear that we are in the business of listening to what the local authorities have to say. I emphasise that £30 million is a significant sum both in absolute terms and in relation to the present sum spent on food safety and food enforcement. It is generally recognised by many outside the House—certainly outside the Labour party—that that sum represents a good response by the Government. Moreover, the Audit Commission is undertaking a study on food law enforcement and especially on how the law is enforced by environmental health officers and it may make recommendations on the more effective use of resources.

My hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller) cannot fail to have noticed the consultation document issued by my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Department of Health which deals with all aspects of training. I hope that, before the closing date at the end of this month, either as an individual or on behalf of many of the organisations to which he may talk, he will make representations to the Department of Health on what training is necessary. I also hope that, in the circumstances and in view of the explanation that I have given, the hon. Member for Caerphilly will feel that he can withdraw his new clause.

Mr. Ron Davies: I am not sure whether I am overwhelmed by the Minister's argument, but I am grateful that, at last, we have flushed out from him a firm promise on the £30 million in this brief debate. I am grateful, too, that he has at last given an undertaking to enter into meaningful consultation with local authorities. He will understand that we shall be in contact with them. In the light of those two little bits of good news, if not concessions, we shall not press the new clause. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New Clause 5

LICENSING OF CERTAIN PREMISES

'.—(1) This section shall have effect for securing the licensing of certain premises used for the purposes of a food business by means of regulations under section 20(1)(b).

(2) The Ministers shall make regulations under section 20(1)(b) in respect of premises in which food is prepared by the processes of pre-cooked chilled products, low-acid canning, aseptic packaging and vacuum packaging.'.—*[Dr. David Clark.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the clause be read a Second time.—*[Dr. David Clark.]*

8 pm

Mr. Martlew: New clause 5 would strengthen the Bill by providing a licensing system that will ensure that certain food premises where various food processes are conducted are licensed and not registered. The Government propose to introduce a register, which would be excessively bureaucratic and take considerable time to compile and would require considerable finance to maintain. Such a register would do little to stem the tide —the epidemic—of food poisoning that is sweeping the country. The word "epidemic" is not mine; it was used by the chief medical officer of health—Ministers are always quoting the chief medical officer of health—who told the Select Committee's salmonella inquiry that an epidemic of food poisoning was sweeping the country.

The Government's answer to that problem is a registration scheme that will do nothing to improve minimum standards or ensure that the owners of premises are trained or experienced. Environmental health officers will not prosecute people who are not registered. They will find someone who is not registered and say, "You are not registered, so go along and register." If environmental health departments decide to prosecute, they will be accused of being petty. They will go to a magistrate, and

he will ask, "What laws have been broken?" They will say, "He refuses to register." He will ask, "Has he corrected that?" They will say, "Yes." The magistrate will then give an absolute discharge and tell the environmental health people not to come back with such trivial matters.

Registration reminds me of the ribbon around an expensive Easter egg—it is there for effect. When one eats the egg, one finds that the ribbon adds nothing to the taste. At the end of the day, the ribbon ends up in the bin. All that adds to the cost of the egg. It is very much like the Government's Green Paper on protecting the consumer —many words but not much action. That criticism could be made of the Food Safety Bill.

I should like to quote—or misquote—George Bush, the American President. During the presidential elections, referring to the policies of Michael Dukakis, he asked, "Where's the beef?"—I suspect that, if he were in Britain in 1990, he would have found another phrase. What he meant was, "Where's the substance in the policies?" There is no substance in the registration of food premises, but there would be great substance in a licensing scheme. That is the view not only of the Labour party but of the Consumers Association, the Association of Metropolitan Authorities and the Institute of Environmental Health Officers. It is also the view of a scientist—Sir Mark Richmond, the Government's appointed chairman of the committee on microbiological safety of food. In a letter dated 24 August 1989 to the present Minister—he is always saying that he has just come to the Department, so bovine spongiform encephalopathy has nothing to do with him—he said that at least all catering establishments, processing of pre-cooked chilled products, low acid canning, butchery and meat processing and vacuum packing should be licensed.

What did the Government do? They completely ignored that advice. Less than a fortnight ago, the Minister gave evidence to the Select Committee and said, "I should like to cull calves, but my advisers say that we should not do that. I should like to carry out research, but my scientists advise me that it is not necessary." His chief scientist, Sir Mark Richmond, advised him to introduce licensing. For one reason or another, the Minister decided to kick out that advice. We suspect that the food processing industry has put pressure on the Government. That reason alone has prevented the introduction of licensing.

We do not have licensing because the Minister has said that it is bureaucratic and not practical. However, we have licensing systems. For example, betting shops, cinemas and theatres are licensed.

Mr. Ron Davies: And public houses.

Mr. Martlew: When we talk about licensed premises, we normally talk about public houses. Since the Ale House Act 1928, we have had licensed public houses. It is not a simple matter of going to a local council and getting a licence. The process is complicated, but it works successfully. I have not heard any Minister say that public houses should not be licensed. A person who wishes to obtain a licence applies to magistrates and submits a plan of the public house. The magistrates then decide to have a site visit to examine the premises and determine whether it is fit for the consumption of alcohol.

The licensee is brought to court and questioned. He is asked, among other things, "What training, qualifications and experience do you have to be granted a licence to run a public house or a restaurant?" It is ironic that the Government are concerned about public houses. When it comes to selling alcoholic beverages to get people drunk, premises must be licensed, but when it comes to selling people food that can poison or kill them, all that is needed is a register. There is no common sense in that policy.

We have the remnants of Thatcherism. Common sense says that we should have a licensing system, but all we have is the old policy of "Get the bureaucrats off the back of business and let the free market go forth and prosper". Ironically, all the markets in this country are also licensed. However, the free market, when it comes to food processing and the sale of food, kills people. That is why I hope that we can have a positive response from the Minister.

I suspect that there is a leeway in the Bill for the introduction of licensing. If this Government do not introduce licensing, the next Labour Government will look seriously at it so that people can be protected against those who are concerned only with making profits. That does not apply to the majority of people who sell food, but it certainly applies to the minority who cause the problems.

When the Minister replies, I hope that he will say that the Government have been convinced and that they will change their policies. If they do not, a Labour Government will give the matter serious consideration. We should be grateful to this Government for giving us the means of implementing a licensing system.

Mr. Dorrell: I believe that this is the first occasion on which the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) has spoken from the Opposition Front Bench for his party. I welcome him to his new responsibilities. Although I did not find his argument persuasive, I hope that this will be the first of many occasions on which he speaks from that Dispatch Box.

The hon. Gentleman began by suggesting that registration is too bureaucratic. He supported that assertion by suggesting that environmental health officers would not be able to initiate prosecutions for non-registration. That power exists, but I hope that there will be relatively few prosecutions for non-registration. The hon. Gentleman's argument missed the point about the purpose of registration. Registration itself is not part of an enforcement mechanism. It is the machinery for giving sufficient information to the environmental health department of the enforcement agency to allow it to use the other powers of the Bill effectively and to reinforce its provisions. Registration is explicitly part of the light regulatory regime that we are seeking to introduce, which would be effective but no more heavy-handed in any individual case than is specifically necessary to achieve the objective.

I am pleased that today I have been able further to elaborate the registration scheme that we propose because today I have published the draft registration form, copies of which are available in the Vote Office. It is a straightforward form that contains only eight questions. It should therefore be quick to complete.

A key section of the form asks businesses to state the type of business that is carried out on the premises. Businesses are divided into three main groups—catering premises, retail premises and food manufacturing premises. The heading "food manufacturing premises" is subdivided to highlight certain processes, including the

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four processes that are identified in the new clause. Any food business will have the right to register, and the process of registration will not be subject to a charge.

Registration will enable local authorities more easily to identify the types of food premises within their boundaries and will consequently enable them to target their enforcement action more effectively. Enforcement officers will have a range of powers—inspection; seizure; the issue of improvement notices, prohibition orders and emergency prohibition notices; and prosecution. Ministers will have the power to make emergency control orders. We believe that registration backed by that panoply of powers, which are the effective machinery of enforcement, will be a simple but effective way of ensuring good standards of hygiene throughout the food industry.

The new clause suggests that we should license the premises used for the four processes that are quoted in the new clause. The hon. Member for Carlisle prayed in aid the report of the Richmond committee and suggested that it endorsed his argument. That is not strictly true. The Richmond committee suggested that the process—not the premises—should be licensed.

However, as the hon. Gentleman rightly said, the Government are taking the power that is contained within the Bill to do what he proposes, should the need arise. I do not believe that the need will arise, but I prefer the way that we are advocating because it is much more flexible than his suggestions. There is already the longstop that the hon. Gentleman wants, because we can invoke that power. However, I do not believe that it will be necessary. On that basis, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will feel able to withdraw his new clause.

Question put and negatived.

New Clause 6

Food Labelling Advisory Committee

'.—(1) There shall be established a body to be called the Food Labelling Advisory Committee ("the Committee") to perform the functions assigned to the Committee by or under this section.

(2) The members of the Committee, of whom there shall be not less than eight, shall be appointed by the Minister after consultation with such persons and organisations as he considers appropriate.

(3) The Committee shall give to the Minister advice on matters relating to the implementation of this section or the exercise of any power conferred by it, or otherwise relating to food labelling, where the Committee consider it expedient, or they are requested by the Minister to do so.

(4) The Committee shall have a duty to identify labelling descriptions which are misleading and shall have a duty to propose to the Minister alternative descriptions.

(5) The functions of the Food Advisory Committee in respect of food labelling and compositional standards shall be transferred to the Committee from the first day this Act comes into force.'.—*[Mr. Matthew Taylor.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

8.15 pm

Mr. Matthew Taylor: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this, it will be convenient to consider the following amendments: No. 32, in clause 8, page 6, line 19 at end insert—

'(d) it is not reasonably safe, having regard to all the circumstances, including the manner in which, and the purposes for which, the food is being marketed, the composition of the food, the use of any mark in relation to food and any instructions or warnings which are given with respect to the keeping, use of or consumption of the food.'.

No. 33, in clause 17, page 14, line 28 at end insert—

'In making regulations under subsection (1) above, the Ministers shall take all necessary steps to ensure that milk collected from cows which have been subject to injection with bovine somatotrophin shall be labelled as such.'.

Mr. Taylor: New clause 6 proposes a food labelling advisory committee as opposed to what happens at present, when labelling matters come within the remit of the much more general Food Advisory Committee. Hon. Members who served on the Committee will be aware that Liberal Democrats have taken a particular interest throughout in the issue of food labelling. The new clause is an attempt to put that issue back on the agenda today and to move forward from what we believe to be a weak position for a Government who, in other respects, have accepted the argument that the consumer should have elements of choice. That choice could come with accurate and proper labelling. Labelling should not only be accurate in scientific terms, but should be capable of being readily understood by consumers when they are making their purchases. The anomalies and the misleading labelling that exists at the moment—and which is allowed—demonstrates that the Government and the Food Advisory Committee have failed in the job of providing the consumer with that service.

We need a separate body specifically dedicated to labelling. As one example of the areas in which improved labelling would be appropriate, the amendments would allow the labelling of mechanically recovered meat. That would enable consumers to make a distinction between artificial and natural ingredients.

Throughout the Bill's passage, I have repeatedly used the example of yoghurts that are labelled "strawberry flavour" as opposed to those that are labelled "strawberry-flavoured". To most people in the shops, that does not seem a distinction of great relevance, but it distinguishes between artificial ingredients and natural ingredients, such as real strawberries in the product.

I refer also to the distinction between "battery eggs" and "farm fresh eggs". In fact, there is no distinction, but a consumer who does not want to buy eggs produced from battery hens will not be aware of that fact. Frankly, the egg producers would use the description "battery eggs" rather than "farm fresh eggs" if they thought that the consumer would not react badly to the term "battery eggs". Producers use the term "farm fresh eggs" precisely because of the images that that conjures up in consumers' minds. That image is wholly wrong but the description helps to sell the eggs.

We want to ensure that "Cape" produce bears the words "South Africa". To many consumers, "Cape" produce and South African produce are different kettles of fish. Hon. Members may or may not feel that people should buy goods from South Africa, but some consumers may not want to buy South African goods and it may not occur to them that South African produce is labelled "Cape".

We also want to replace the word "tenderised" when that refers to the fact that the animal has been injected with a vegetable enzyme. That is not what one thinks of when one sees a product labelled "tenderised". When a cookery book states, "Tenderise your meat", it is not envisaged

that the housewife will get out a hypodermic needle and inject the meat. The cookery book means that the meat should be bashed with a hammer.

Those are all examples of the way in which the present labelling system fails to give consumers what they think they are getting. In this respect, information is power and ignorance is impotence. It is high time that the Government did something about it.

Amendment No. 32 has received the strong backing of the Consumers Association. It is designed to ensure that the Bill includes a general safety clause and to make it an offence to sell food that fails to comply with the food safety requirements. We believe that being legally accountable for the safety of the food that they sell will make suppliers more careful about what they buy and how they store and display it. Although the proposed safety requirements are a considerable improvement on the present legislation—I do not take that away from the Government—they still do not meet the standards of other consumer protection legislation. The draft EC product safety directive, for example, which covers food, contains a much more wide-ranging safety duty that takes account of the

"intended use, consumption, packaging, transport and storage of a product, according to normal circumstances".

That is precisely the intention of the amendments.

The Consumer Protection Act 1987 imposes a similar general duty of safety, and trading standards officers have used it successfully. It is difficult to see why Ministers argue that such a measure is unusable or inappropriate. Clearly, they believe that it is appropriate in other areas and, indeed, the EEC believes that it is appropriate in food safety. Such a measure is used successfully in other areas.

The catch-all that the amendment would provide will extend all the way along the food chain and cover any loopholes that may emerge in the future. That is particularly important in food safety where technology, as we have already said, is changing rapidly. The provision would ensure that any potential risk presented by the product is appropriately indicated to make the consumer aware of it and allow an individual assessment of its seriousness.

The Government have maintained that such a provision is not necessary. They argue that all eventualities are covered by other, more targeted provisions in the Bill. However, the Consumers Association has identified two examples of loopholes in the Bill as currently drafted. Those loopholes were highlighted during the debate on this issue in the House of Lords. One loophole involves microwave ovens. There has been recent speculation about how effectively microwave cooking kills listeria. Some manufacturers of the ovens have reacted by removing instructions on how to microwave a particular product to heat it up because of worries that listeria might not be entirely eliminated by following the instructions. However, manufacturers provided no warning about goods that people may have cooked by microwave for some years following the users' instructions. To consumers it was the same old product that they had bought many times and heated in the same way. No warning was provided that the product was unsuitable for microwaving. Consumers could be forgiven for expecting to be able to continue to reheat the product in the microwave. The inclusion of a general safety requirement, such as that in the amendments, would require manufacturers to label such products as unsuitable for microwaving.

There is a similar loophole with red kidney beans. We know that there is a problem if the product is not properly cooked and that it can cause quite severe stomach upsets. Indeed, the Government issued prompt advice to the food industry urging it to label products accordingly. However, there is no legal requirement on suppliers to co-operate.

When those examples of loopholes were debated in the House of Lords, the Minister maintained that the addition of a general safety duty was unnecessary. In my view, he failed to give adequate explanation of how the existing provisions would cover the specific problems that had been pointed out. For example, the Minister claimed that the food labelling regulations covered kidney beans. However, beans sold loose are not covered by the regulations and whether pre-packed beans are covered is arguable.

The Minister referred to the provisions of clause 8, which deem food unfit if it has been rendered injurious to health or contaminated. But neither of the examples that I have given would be covered by that. The Minister also referred to the labelling and presentation requirements in clause 15. It covers false or misleading descriptions of food, but neither problem would be covered by it.

The Bill represents the Government's acceptance of the need to take measures to provide the public with general safety. The Ministers argue that the Bill does that. It is clear that the Bill does not do so in all eventualities. A general safety clause would cover all eventualities. Other legislation includes such clauses and I see no realistic or good reason why Ministers should oppose it. I hope that they will take this opportunity to react accordingly.

Amendment No. 33 requires the labelling of milk from cows which have been treated with BST. It does not address the question whether that product should be sold at all. In many respects, the simplest solution would be not to sell it to the public but simply to destroy it. Presently only three sites are testing BST and only 71 cows are involved. If the Government do not wish to pursue that course, at least they should let the consumer know what they are buying, according to exactly the same principle on which the Minister argued in the case of irradiation. He maintained that there was no risk from irradiation but that consumers should be allowed to be aware of what they were buying in order to exercise an informed choice. It is well known that, from the National Farmers Union to the women's institutes, consumers demand that knowledge and the ability to exercise that choice. However, it seems that Ministers are not prepared to give them that choice. Why not? When testing is being carried out at only three sites using only 71 cows, why not collect the milk separately, bottle it separately and label it to see whether people want it or not? *[Laughter.]*

Mr. Ron Davies: They will not.

Mr. Taylor: I notice Labour Members laughing. I bet my bottom dollar that there would be no buyers for such milk if it were so labelled. That may be why the Government do not want to do so. The thought crossed the mind of the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies). Perhaps it has crossed the Minister's mind too. We should at least test it. If the Minister thinks that people will want to buy such milk, if is easy enough to test.

The only argument against labelling milk from BST-treated cows is that BST is the same as the natural hormone in cows. People say that one simply adds to the level of hormone in the cow but that in other respects one

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cannot tell the injected hormone and the natural hormone apart. The problem with that is, first, that the Government argue that irradiation is safe but that customers must be informed that food is irradiated. That is a right principle and it should apply to BST, too. Secondly, the case that BST is identical to the natural hormone is not proven. On the contrary, the molecular structure is different. On that basis alone, there is reason for caution, quite apart from evidence from Monsanto trials that, for example, cows injected with BST show significant and unnatural increases in the size of the internal organs, especially the heart and the kidneys, that pregnancy rates in BST-treated cows are almost half that in control cows and that the hormone content of BST milk is 26 times higher than that of normal milk. Monsanto's own trials revealed those details. They do not mean that there is necessarily a danger or a risk, but, on the basis of everything that Ministers have said about other matters from BSE to irradiation, surely the consumer should be protected against that risk, particularly while trials are taking place.

The trials happen to be taking place in the west country so I have a particularly strong interest in the matter. I hope that the Minister will take the opportunity to act to protect and inform the consumer by making labelling a requirement.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): I say to the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) and to the House that instinctively the Labour party is opposed to BST. We have made that clear. Whether this is the right vehicle to express our opposition to it is another matter. The hon. Gentleman would not expect us to go that far.

As this is the only occasion tonight on which I shall seek to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I take this opportunity—*[Interruption.]* I am glad that that has given pleasure to the hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory). I am sorry to say that it seems to have given him more pleasure than his speech gave me. I say that in a spirit of generosity because recently I visited his constituency. I take this opportunity to apologise for not having told him.

I was a member of what was a pleasant Standing Committee because I am a member of the health team. I found myself from time to time opposite the hon. Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman). I am sure that we all wish him well with his new portfolio. I enjoyed working with him on the Committee dealing with this Bill as well as on the Committee dealing with the National Health Service and Community Care Bill. In that spirit we extend a welcome to the hon. Member for Loughborough (Mr. Dorrell).

I hope that the hon. Member for Truro will not be too disappointed when I say that, having listened to his speech for the second time, and although I appreciate that there is much to be said for the principles that he expounded, we cannot agree with the details. The principles are well intentioned, but although we support the main objectives of the new clause we have reservations about the details.

Food labelling is an essential part of the safety process and consumers have a right to expect labelling to be clear, accurate and informative. To be fair to food suppliers, such labelling is already provided; there are technical difficulties that the Committee recognised, but I shall not detain the House with them tonight as they are already on record.

8.30 pm

An area of particular concern involves new products and ingredients whose names are less familiar to consumers. The E numbers are used as part of a common EC nomenclature, but they are strange to many consumers. More information on that specific matter would be helpful to shoppers.

The new clause lacks reality because it proposes a specialist food labelling advisory committee. To achieve that would diminish the functions of the Food Advisory Committee, which already does useful work on labelling and compositional standards. We respect the work of the FAC and we do not want its role diminished, but that would follow the acceptance of the new clause.

Mr. Maclean *indicated assent.*

Mr. Clarke: I am glad to note that the Minister agrees. I detect that my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) is a bit worried, but his earlier intervention gave me far more pleasure than any of the speeches I heard from Tory Members in Committee. I hope that we hear a great deal more from my hon. Friend.

It is true that consumers should be more strongly represented on the FAC, but things are changing and I hope that the Minister will be able to reassure the House and my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield about that.

Doubtless when responding the Minister will say that the Government consider that the labelling of food is an EC affair and, as such, much of the decision-making about labelling occurs in Brussels. We are not unaware of the requirement for and benefits of common standards for labels, especially with 1992 in mind. Nevertheless, there must be a large consumer input into the regulations and directives from the EC.

The Government must test any proposals for labelling before those who speak for consumers test them, although I accept that the FAC has the expertise. The new consumer working party established belatedly by MAFF means that the shoppers' view will be known before the Council of Ministers decides on such matters.

For the present we prefer to use that which exists rather than to create another body with a limited function.

Mr. Maclean: I shall deal first with amendment No. 32, which I believe is unnecessary and unworkable.

The House accepts that it is vital to ensure that we will always be able to prohibit the sale of unsafe food. I believe that that is already achieved by the three-part food safety requirement set out in clause 8(2). That requirement takes into account all the factors that have a direct effect on the safety of the final food. It makes little sense to say that food fails to comply with food safety requirements if it is not "reasonably safe". That term is extremely subjective and, even without it, it would be difficult to evaluate whether food was safe. Food that is safe to eat now may be harmful if eaten later. People are also different and food that does no harm to one can be extremely dangerous to another.

I believe that we have got the balance right on our food safety requirements. However, should there be some unforeseen turn of events that means that we need additional measures, we have the powers under clause 17 to make specific regulations to deal with the matters precisely mentioned by the amendment. We can regulate on the composition of food and on labelling and require

warnings to be given to consumers. We have the legislative protection to hand if it is needed. The Bill contains broad and flexible powers based on what is good in existing legislation. I would not want the House to accept the amendment.

It is a pleasure for me to meet the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) at the Dispatch Box. He showed his customary kindness and good humour. On this occasion he displayed his excellent wisdom by pointing out that, even if there is merit in amendment No. 33, the Bill is not the vehicle for it. The same goes for some of the other rag-bag matters that the hon. Member for Truro would like to be subject to labels. We dealt with those issues exhaustively in Committee. If it is meritorious to start labelling South African produce, no doubt we shall get a demand from some Opposition Members to start labelling Nicaraguan produce now that that country is no longer controlled by a nasty left-wing regime. That country is now probably persona non grata. Were we to seek to take such action, we should do so after first taking the advice of the Food Advisory Committee. We could make such changes under the labelling regulations and the powers set out in clause 16. I repeat, however, that the Bill is not the vehicle for the personal issues raised by the hon. Member for Truro that he wants to be subject to labelling.

The hon. Member for Monklands, West was right to cast doubt on the new clause and right to support the FAC. It already advises Ministers on matters relating to the composition, labelling and advertising of food and on additives, contaminants and other substances that might be present. It is unnecessary and undesirable to set up a similar but separate body. The FAC has a chairman and 14 members appointed for their personal expertise—they do not represent particular interests. Five of them are from the food manufacturing or retail industry, five have consumer or enforcement expertise and five are from the academic world. The committee reviews and prepares reports on all matters within its terms of reference and it makes recommendations for legislation where necessary. I set great store by the FAC and I hope that it will continue in its work.

I have told the House on many occasions that we have given the FAC a major task to perform in the next few months as it will advise on all aspects of labelling, identify misleading labelling descriptions and propose alternatives. Many of the issues mentioned by the hon. Member for Truro are currently under review by the FAC. The comprehensive review of food labelling undertaken by that committee will be first class. It will also take into account changing EC obligations. The hon. Member for Monklands, West was right to point out that we are no longer totally our own master in that respect. We must bear in mind EC decisions.

The amendments tabled by the hon. Member for Truro are unnecessary and unworkable and his new clause undermines the excellent work undertaken by the FAC. We see no need to set up a separate body to deal particularly with food labelling. In common with the hon. Member for Monklands, West, I hope that the House will not want the new clause to be added to the Bill.

Question put and negatived.

New Clause 9

DECLARATION OF FEEDINGSTUFFS INGREDIENTS

'For the purpose of protecting and promoting the interests of consumers by means of informing persons in charge of live animals which are food sources from which food in intended to be derived, the Ministers shall by regulations coming into force no later than six months from the day on which this Act is passed provide that compound feedingstuffs may not be marketed unless such particulars as may be prescribed are clearly marked on the packaging or container or on a label attached thereto, including—

(a) the species or category of animal for which the feedingstuff is intended,
(b) directions for the proper use of the feedingstuff,
(c) a declaration listing all of the ingredients in the feedingstuff described by their specific names in descending order by weight,
(d) the energy value of the feedingstuff,
(e) the date of manufacture and minimum storage life of the feedingstuff and
(f) the name and address of the person responsible for the prescribed particulars.'.—*[Mr. Ron Davies.]*

Brought up, and read the First Time.

Mr. Ron Davies: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 1, in clause 1, page 1, line 13, at end insert—

'(e) fodder or feedingstuffs for animals, birds or fish intended for human consumption'.

No. 2, in clause 1, page 1, line 17, at end insert 'not intended for human consumption'.

No. 3, in clause 17, page 14, line 10, at end insert 'provided that regulations controlling the presence of substances in food sources shall not permit the presence in fodder or feedingstuffs for animals intended for human consumption of substances not permitted for use in food intended for human consumption'.

No. 4, in clause 17, page 14, line 10, at end insert—

'(1A) In making regulations under subsection (1) above, the Ministers shall take all necessary actions to ensure that fodder or feedingstuffs for animals intended for human consumption be so labelled as to provide full details of the ingredients and origin of the fodder or feedingstuffs.'.

Mr. Davies: The purpose of the new clause is to make provision in the Bill to require those who are responsible for manufacturing animal feedstuffs to label the contents in a manner that is clearly understood by the purchasers of those foodstuffs.

The House will appreciate the need for the new clause. It is common knowledge that the food industry has been shattered in the last couple of years by two instances of epidemic caused by the consumption by farm animals of contaminated feedstuffs. I refer to salmonella infection in the poultry industry and the current epidemic of BSE in our cattle herd, both arising directly—I believe this is beyond disagreement now—from the consumption of contaminated feedstuffs.

There is no doubt in my mind that beef producers, given the opportunity, would now be feeding their animals nothing but feedstuffs containing vegetable protein. I am equally sure that consumers would be happier if they could purchase beef that had been produced from cattle fed with nothing but vegetable protein. Unfortunately, that cannot be the case because under the present law in Britain cattle can still be fed the rendered remains of pigs and chickens and chicken litter, and various items such as plywood can still be mixed in with cattle feed. I am not sure how a diet of rendered pigs, chicken litter and plywood quite fits in

[Mr. Davies]

with the theological menu which the current Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food would have us believe is suitable for vegetarian cows.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): It is the second time that the hon. Gentleman has made that point.

Mr. Davies: That may be so. The hon. Lady has just drifted into the Chamber, no doubt having been entertaining herself in the west end. I agree that it is the second time, and if the opportunity arises, I will make the point a third time—

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Really!

Mr. Davies: —and if the hon. Lady continues to interrupt me, I will say it a fourth and a fifth time. It is a valuable point. The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is unfortunately obsessed with theology and pays too little attention to the proper running of his Ministry —*[Interruption.]* The natives on the Conservative Benches must learn when they get restless that if they want to dish it out, they must be prepared to take it. I learnt that early in life. I shall be happy to stay for the rest of the night taking what they have to dish out, but I warn them that I shall give it back with interest.

The Minister preaches the virtues of feeding vegetarian cows a diet of vegetable matter. But he presides over a Department which has regulations allowing the rendered remains of pigs, chicken litter and plywood to be fed to cattle. That is a fact—*[Interruption.]* If Conservative Members do not like it, I am sorry; I do not like it either. That is why we need the new clause. I hope that they will rise in abundance to support it because, according to a poll in today's issue of *Farming News*, 82 per cent. of farmers believe there should be a total ban on the inclusion of meat and bone meal in animal rations.

Opposition Members have been calling for that for well over a year. If the Government are not prepared to take that fundamental precautionary step, they should at least ensure that livestock producers have the opportunity to follow their own, more sensible, approach and choose not to feed livestock on rations containing meat and bone meal. It is a fundamental question of choice.

At present, the Government, for all their protestations about consumer sovereignty and the disclosure of information, refuse to take the basic step of requiring the feed compounders to list the ingredients of their rations. The new clause would not require the disclosure of any trade secrets or commercially sensitive information. The exact proportions and nutritional balance of compound feeds, which are the commercially sensitive bits of information, would remain confidential.

But the compounders would have to disclose what is in the feed. To take a topical example, they would have to disclose whether a high protein cake contained entirely vegetable protein or animal protein, too. Why should not the farmer have that information so that he can make a choice, particularly if the Government refuse to do the sensible thing and ban ruminant-derived protein from all animal feed?

Mr. Ashby: Almost all the farmers in my constituency have been crying out for some knowledge of what is in their feedstuff and say that they would not feed their cattle animal products if they knew that feedstuff contained such products. I would support the new clause but for the fact that I am aware of an EEC directive and believe that it is probably better that the matter is tackled through the European Community. If that were not the case, I would support wholeheartedly what the hon. Gentleman is saying.

8.45 pm

Mr. Davies: That is not much consolation to the beef producers of Scotland, Wales and England, who are seeing the bottom fall out of their market. If the only answer the hon. Gentleman can offer them is, "Hang around for a couple of years and in 1992 we might get some European legislation, and then all will be okay," I suggest he tells that to the farmers in his constituency. They are crying out for action, not in two years' time but in two days' time. That would enable them immediately to take the necessary action themselves. They would be empowered to take action to help resolve the crisis that is afflicting their industry. I appreciate the point that the hon. Gentleman makes, but we must act with urgency. There is no time to waste.

The Daily Telegraph said in an interesting article this morning:

"Eighty two per cent. of the sample"—

conducted for *Farming News*

"said they wanted a compulsory ban on the use of meat and bone meal in all farm livestock rations. These ingredients can still be used in food for pigs and poultry."

It is abundantly clear that farmers have a greater understanding of public susceptibility in these matters than has the Ministry.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that at a meeting in York last week of 300 beef farmers from all over the country, not one was convinced, having listened to the evidence, that there was any scientific backing for what the hon. Gentleman is saying? The animal feed people at the meeting made it clear that, if individual farmers wished to have certain rations taken out of the feed supplied to them, they had only to ask.

Mr. Ashby: Oh?

Mr. Greenway: I was at the meeting.

Mr. Davies: I am enjoying the sight of Conservative Members being almost at each other's throats. I followed with interest what happened at that conference in York. I read the background to it and I appreciate the enthusiasm that existed there. I also know of the enthusiasm on the part of consumers, who are anxious to buy a product in which they have total confidence. Frankly, if we continue feeding chicken litter to cattle and expect to have public confidence in our beef-producing industry, the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) will have to think again.

Mr. Greenway: Rubbish.

Mr. Davies: The hon. Gentleman might think it rubbish. He should rise and defend his position on this. I quoted from a sample of farmers and the view of 82 per cent. of them. A poll in today's issue of *Farming News* shows that farmers believe that there should be a total ban on the feeding of meat and bone meal. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman was present about a week ago for the debate on BSE. There may be scientific evidence to suggest that there is nothing demonstrably wrong with the

practice. But that is not the heart of the argument. There may be dangers about which we do not yet know and, anyway, consumers do not like the practice.

If that is not enough, and if the 35 per cent. drop in the British beef market is not enough to convince the hon. Member for Ryedale of the true position, I can only say that I care more for the £250 million interest that the farmers of Wales have in the beef industry. The hon. Gentleman might think it satisfactory to feed chicken litter to cattle, but there are dangers in doing that. For example, an article in the June 1990 issue of *Agscene* says:

"Australian beef producers were shaken in the new year by a mass botulism outbreak among cattle from two feedlots in the Queensland area. 5,000 animals destined for the lucrative Japanese grain-fed beef market have reportedly died after consuming chicken manure mixed in feed causing the fatal attack of food poisoning."

The hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) may say that they do not enjoy the protection of the European Community and that that could not happen in the Community or in Britain. I refer the hon. Gentleman to an article in the *Veterinary Record* of 27 May 1989. It states:

"A major outbreak of type C botulism in cattle has recently been reported from Northern Ireland . . . Eighty animals from a herd of 150 housed beef cattle were affected and 68 of them died. It was the largest outbreak of bovine botulism recorded in Europe and the first to be caused by feeding ensiled poultry litter to cattle, a practice which is common in Northern Ireland and in many other European countries. In view of the risk of botulism from this feed source, and because of the severity of the outbreak, some additional laboratory findings relating to the incident are presented in this paper and their implications are discussed."

There is no doubt that there is a major problem with our food producing industries. One way to start to restore confidence is to ensure that farmers can buy with certainty products whose labels have a legal basis so that if the farmers wish to produce organically or to give a guarantee that their animals have consumed nothing other than vegetable protein they should be able to do so.

If consumers want to go to the butcher with some certainty that the animals with which he has been supplied have been fed only vegetable protein, they should be entitled to do that. It is wrong for anyone to suggest that those fundamental freedoms in the production and consumption of animal products should not be afforded by legislation. The National Farmers Union endorses that view. Notwithstanding the comments of its president at the conference in York last week, that is now the official view of the union. In correspondence to me on 5 June the union said:

"For over a decade the NFU have been calling for an obligation on suppliers of compound feedingstuffs for farm livestock to declare the specific ingredients of those feedingstuffs so that farmers can know more precisely what they are feeding to their animals. We believe that such a requirement is important for the confidence of both farmers as producers of animals for the food chain and for consumers as the farmers' customers".

The Country Landowners Association also contacted me and asked to go on record. It wishes to have its support recorded for the campaign for compulsory labelling of feedstuff ingredients. The association says that farmers and landowners will not be impressed by the argument of the hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West that the United Kingdom can simply wait for the EEC directive on feedingstuffs and should not act before the due date.

The Government have an excellent opportunity to show that they can respond positively to the consumer's need to know what is in feedstuffs. By accepting the amendment the Government would bring United Kingdom law into line with the objective of the EEC directive. What could be a better position to defend in Europe in view of the situation in the past couple of years when the practices in this country unfortunately brought our agriculture into disrepute?

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): The four amendments in my name and the names of my hon. Friends are quite far reaching in their implications because, as well as having labelling requirements and requirements that labels should show ingredients and the country of origin, they bring feedingstuffs for animals designed for human consumption into the definition of food within the Bill. That is a radical concept which is worth looking at when one thinks of the objectives that the Government themselves have set and the need to establish the kind of confidence that the industry deserves.

I represent a prime beef-producing area. It is in the interests of farmers in my constituency that standards should be brought up to those that they keep rather than pulled down by the bad practice that occasionally arises. I do not find support for the idea of feeding animal protein to herbivore ruminant animals, nor do I find confidence in the idea that what is unfit for human consumption is somehow fit for consumption by animals which we will eat. Those issues arouse increasing feeling among consumers and increasing recognition by farmers of the need to maintain the high standards to which many work and to which more are beginning to work. I hope that the Minister will look sympathetically at the approach that we have suggested. I hope that he shares our objective.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): It is a major item of Government policy that the consumer should exercise informed choice. In this case the consumer is the farmer who wants to be able to exercise choice that is informed by accurate labelling of what he is buying. This is in line with mainstream Government policy and I trust that the Government will accept the new clause for which I shall certainly vote.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): If the Government refuse to accept the new clause, it will be symptomatic of their whole approach to these matters. They are in the 11th hour, under siege in Europe, with a 35 per cent. reduction in beef sales and are seeing the world caving in around them. If they resist the new clause they will be exhibiting a head-in-the-sand attitude.

My hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) has already mentioned representations from the National Farmers Union south of the border and from the Country Landowners Association. I wish to put on record the support of the National Farmers Union of Scotland. In order to answer the points raised against the new clause by Conservative Members, I reiterate that, although the EEC directive has been approved, it does not take effect until January 1991. The Scottish NFU quite specifically addresses that point by saying that under the new clause the opportunity arises to bring forward by 18 months what has already been acknowledged should happen at that time. The union states:

"In view of the widespread public concern on this particular issue, the Union would ask you to support this initiative on an issue which is of such importance to producers and consumers alike".

[Mr. Brian Wilson]

In Scotland the impact is being felt although the herds are almost exclusively free from this affliction. Scottish farmers want the protection of being able to say to the world, "We are doing the most rather than the least"." However, the Government refuse to address that.

The point made by the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) is dismissed in the union's letter. The Scottish NFU would not write to every Scottish Member asking us to argue in favour of the new clause if its membership was opposed to it or complacent about it. The Scottish NFU treats it as a matter of urgency because it at least knows what is happening in Europe and in the shops and is aware of the views of its members. The Scottish NFU wants the Government to act. It wants the Government to be seen to be doing the most rather than the least to meet the urgent threat that exists.

Mr. John Greenway: I am sorry about the way that this debate has been conducted because I do not think that there is any difference of opinion in the House about the long-term goal or the need for improved labelling of the ingredients of food rations. Far from helping farmers and beef producers, the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) indulged in the continuing scaremongering that is emanating as much from the Opposition as from the British press. That undermines what our beef producers are trying to achieve.

I went to the meeting in York, which is close to my constituency, and listened for three hours to what farmers had to say. The hon. Member for Caerphilly is right. There is widespread concern about the future of agriculture as a consequence of what has been said in the media about BSE. There is no scientific advice to back up much of what the hon. Gentleman said.

Last week, I went to a major feed manufacturer—one of the biggest in the north of England—in my constituency. I discovered that, whereas the Government banned the use of ruminant protein in cattle feeds in 1988, this feed manufacturer voluntarily stopped using it in 1986 in response to requests from farmers. I have spoken to several feed manufacturers today and they have asked me to make it clear that if a farmer is not happy with the food ration, there is an opportunity for him to say that he does not wish certain ingredients in the feed for cattle, pigs or poultry. This is happening more and more often.

We all want to see labelling of foodstuffs, but there is a problem, apart from the need to ensure that any action is on a European Communitywide basis. If there is one lesson that we should learn from what has happened in the past two or three days and our efforts to get the French and German ban on English beef lifted, it is that there are higher standards on husbandry, animal welfare and food hygiene and animal feed hygiene in Britain than on the continent. There is no point in our legislating without bringing the rest of the European Community with us. That is why it is important that we have a European Communitywide arrangement.

My second point has not yet been made. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister and his colleagues at the Ministry will consult widely over the arrangements. There are major difficulties in dealing with some of the matters that have been raised. There is no disagreement on what we wish to see achieved, but when the hon. Member for Caerphilly starts scaremongering, he destroys the British beef farmer.

9 pm

Mr. Maclean: I sympathise with the mood of the House and its wish to ensure that food producers are provided with the detailed information that they need on important inputs such as animal feedingstuffs. My hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) used a good phrase, "informed consumer choice". That appeals to me and to the Government. However, I have made it clear in earlier debates, first, that such matters are properly dealt with in regulations made under the Agriculture Act 1970 rather than in a food Bill dealing with human food, and, secondly, that in this sector, conditions are being introduced for the European Community as a whole. My hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) was right to stress that point.

The new clause specifies six categories of information that should be required of feedingstuff manufacturers. For the benefit of the House, I shall set out both existing arrangements and the provision of the recently-approved EC directive. I think that it will be seen that we have either already introduced or are well on the way to introducing practically all the requirements of the new clause.

The first two requirements set out that the species or category of animal for which the feedingstuff is intended should be stated and that directions for the proper use of the feed should be given. Both these matters are existing requirements of the Feedingstuffs Regulations 1988. Further categories of information covered by the new clause are the date of manufacture, the minimum storage life and the details of the person responsible for the accuracy of the information. The present regulations already require the latter to be set down and, while declaration of the date of manufacture and storage life are optional, the recent directive will make it obligatory to supply this information also. In the case of four of the six categories, therefore—categories *(a)*, *(b)*, *(e)*, and *(f)* —the information sought is either already obligatory or well on the way to being made obligatory.

We are left with ingredient listing and a declaration of energy value, and the latter is difficult and complicated. My hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale alluded to that. There is no agreement in the Community on the best approach to the necessary calculations, but I assure the House that the UK is in the forefront of the work that is proceeding and we shall be pressing urgently to continue the work at all speed. However, it would be unrealistic, and I do not want to give the House the impression that it would be possible, to expect that early agreement that would allow for the declaration of energy values on a uniform basis will be achieved.

The essential element, in any case, is ingredient listing. Here a considerable step forward was taken when the new directive was agreed in January. It provides for obligatory listing, either of specific ingredients or of categories of similar ingredients.

Mr. Wilson: We all know about the directive and know that it is taking effect from 1991, but the precise point of organisations such as the National Farmers Union for Scotland, and its English counterpart, getting in touch with Opposition Members is to say that that is not good enough, as there is an 18-month gap. The NFU at least recognises the urgency of the position, having said:

"The declaration of ingredients of manufactured livestock feeds has to be made compulsory as soon as possible."

Is the Minister saying that 18 months is "as soon as possible"?

Mr. Maclean: If the hon. Gentleman knows all about it, why table an amendment to the Bill? This is largely a matter of EC competence, and a matter for the Feedingstuffs Regulations 1988.

As I have said, a considerable step forward was taken when the new directive was agreed in January. It remains for the experts to work out the categories that may be used to draw up the necessary reference list of ingredients that will permit manufacturers to make their declarations on a common basis across the European Community.

The Opposition should appreciate that there is a great deal of complex technical work involved. It is not a matter of sticking the names of half a dozen ingredients on a bag; hundreds of ingredients could be used and named. We must get the definitions correct if the legislation is to mean anything, is to be enforceable, and does not disadvantage Great Britain in relation to other countries.

I can assure the House that, like my colleagues in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, I want to be sure that the work is given the impetus that it deserves. We shall be actively pressing for rapid progress, so that ingredient listing can be introduced as early as possible.

I urge the House not to accept the new clause. Regulations on animal feed are a matter for the Agriculture Act 1986, and we shall use the powers in that Act to implement the labelling requirements in due course. In view of the assurances that I have given tonight, we shall press ahead with the details as soon as possible. This Bill is not an appropriate place for animal-feed labelling regulations—much as we want them—and I hope that the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) will not press the new clause to a vote.

Mr. Ron Davies: I shall make two brief points. I am sorry if the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) thinks that our comments about public confidence in the food industry are equivalent to scaremongering. Opposition Members argued that the Government should ban bovine offals for human consumption nine months before such a ban was introduced. We argued 12 months in advance that 100 per cent. compensation should be given for infected animals. However, despite pressure from Opposition Members, the National Farmers Union and others, the Government took 12 months to be persuaded of the rightness of such a move. I resent the attitude that implies that drawing attention to matters of public concern and pressing the Government to adopt policies to safeguard the public interest is equivalent to scaremongering, and I hope the hon. Member for Ryedale will reconsider his views.

I understand the wisdom of seeking Europewide measures, if only to prevent a recurrence of the practice that, until last month, we were carrying on in our trade with France. I am sure that the Minister is aware that every month we were sending boat loads of meat and bonemeal from this country. That very meat and bonemeal was banned from ruminant feed in this country, but it was being incorporated in the rations being fed to French cattle. Under our trading arrangements with France, there was nothing to prevent the products of those cattle being shipped back to this country. That was happening until last month. That, if anything, demonstrates the need for Europewide action.

Having said that, let me add that the Minister gave a generous—and, I believe, genuine—assurance that he recognises and shares our concern, and intends to treat the matter with urgency. As I take his assurances at their face value, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 9

INSPECTION AND SEIZURE OF SUSPECTED FOOD

Mr. Gregory: I beg to move amendment No. 22, in page 7, line 44, after 'value', insert

'and other costs, claims, damages and expenses incurred or suffered by the owner directly'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this we shall discuss Government amendment No. 10.

Mr. Gregory: The House will recall that new clause 7 was withdrawn after a debate in Committee on 3 April. Its purpose was to extend the compensation to businesses whose goods had been wrongly seized. It was rejected by my hon. Friend the Minister on the grounds that companies could complain to the Local Commissioner for Administration, that they could insure themselves against any loss, that any increase in compensation would deter action by local government enforcement officers and that it would weaken consumer protection. I have carefully considered the arguments, but I do not think they are valid, which is why I have tabled the amendment.

Complaints to the local commissioner can be made only where there is maladministration or where a local authority has acted ultra vires. The amendment addresses costs arising out of genuine mistakes by authorities that are outwith the local commissioner's competence. Insurance for the sort of trade risk dealt with in the amendment is not obtainable, nor is it likely to be. I have carried out a review, in conjunction with the Food and Drink Federation, of the important matter of insurance. It is a new area of risk, falling between liability and business interruption. Insurance cover is not currently available.

Although such cover would be available in principle, in practice it is not attractive. Accordingly, it is the general view of those consulted that it would be difficult to secure that sort of cover, except at a very high and therefore unattractive premium. It may be possible for very large companies to press their insurers to devise a special policy, but that is unlikely to be the case for smaller companies. That view was clearly expressed in letters from the Association of British Insurers and from the Lloyds broker Willis Wrightson. On the important matter of insurance liability, Willis Wrightson said:

"We would anticipate that the cost and extent of additional insurance cover is likely to be analogous to the present market for Malicious Product Tamper Cover . . . since the effect of the two incidents would be similar—adverse publicity, loss of consumer confidence and loss of sales.

In the Malicious Product Tamper market premiums are very high in relation to the limited cover available and therefore many companies do not insure this risk. The effect of a Notice being issued, although later withdrawn, could be particularly damaging to the smaller business who may suffer an irrevocable loss of sales and for whom the cost of insuring such as incident is prohibitive."

I am sure that many hon. Members have such businesses in their constituencies. The letter continued:

"In conclusion, if the Bill passes through Parliament in its present form, if a Notice is issued and withdrawn, many

[Mr. Gregory]

businesses may find themselves with inadequate compensation and unable to purchase adequate insurance cover for this risk."

The highly respected Association of British Insurers was consulted after the Committee stage of the Bill. Its assistant liability and accident manager wrote to the leading trade association, the Food and Drink Federation, saying:

"I am not surprised that your members have experienced a lack of enthusiasm from insurers . . .

Whilst we cannot rule out any of our members providing part or all of the cover in question, or that Lloyds or 'fringe' companies may be a little more positive, it is clear from my enquiries that, in general, company insurers would not wish to offer terms.

Exceptions could be made, however, to substantial and well regarded policyholders but this would be very much for the individual insurer to decide on a case by case basis and would not be generally applied."

Those quotations from a leading Lloyds broker and from the Association of British Insurers show that, having checked the points made in Committee, it is frankly not realistic to insure against that important risk.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To reinforce what my hon. Friend says, even if the damage was directly due to maladministration by a local authority, the local government commissioner's findings are not binding. That is not merely a theoretical consideration; they are often ignored by the local authority against whom a finding of maladministration lies.

9.15 pm

Mr. Gregory: I am grateful to my hon. Friend who, in his wisdom, makes that additional point.

I do not believe that the additional compensation being sought would act as a deterrent to enforcement officers. I would be concerned if that were to be the case. If the Government believe that it would, they should be prepared to underwrite the cost of any such additional compensation.

My hon. Friend the Minister has argued, and I accept, that there is a price to be paid for ensuring public safety. However, under the Bill as presently drafted that cost will fall randomly and disproportionately on innocent manufacturers who are unfortunate enough to be the victims of mistakes by enforcement authorities.

Amendment No. 22 would not result in a single penny being paid in compensation to the guilty; it would result only in extra compensation going to innocent companies which have suffered loss directly as a result of wrongful seizure of goods.

Dr. David Clark: Amendment No. 22 and Government amendment No. 10 raise some of the ideological and philosophical aspects of the Bill. The hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory) has clearly thought about the matter. I listened to him speak in Committee, and I listened to him carefully again today as he made a reasoned case.

The Opposition considered amendment No. 22 carefully. It caused much anguish. I listened carefully to the hon. Gentleman's words, spoken in a gentle tone, about deterrents to local authorities. The advice that we are getting from local authorities is that the additional compensation would act as a deterrent. Environmental health officers have written to me asking me to support amendment No. 10, not amendment No. 22.

The point was made pertinently this weekend in my constituency in connection with the shellfish scare off the north-east coast of England, with which the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) was involved. The local authority, South Tyneside metropolitan council, received notices from the Department of Health that some molluscs were incredibly dangerous and should not be eaten, and the appropriate notices were served. Similarly, the Department of Health was concerned—rightly—about the possible health risks from some crustaceans—lobsters, crabs and prawns—and warned the local authority.

Under the current law, the local authority could not take any action, although it may be able to under the new law. For one week, crabs, lobsters and prawns throughout the north-east were withheld voluntarily by the fishermen at some considerable cost to themselves. I say voluntarily because the environmental health officer in my authority said that he could not officially impose any restriction on the sale of those products for the simple reason that he would then be liable to be sued because there was no evidence that there was any contamination in those particular kinds of shellfish—prawns, lobsters and crabs. There is routine testing of the molluscs, but there is no routine testing of crabs and lobsters. That is an example of where the present law is not right and I hope that the future law will be better.

Mr. Beith: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will note for the sake of clarification that the lobsters never did pose any danger and that the Ministry has now made clear that lobsters hygienically stored after being caught during that period are now regarded by the Ministry as safe to eat.

Dr. Clark: The hon. Gentleman and I have worked on that topic together, and I know that he takes a slightly different view. I think that the Department of Health was right. My feeling is that, if any doubt exists, public health must be the first priority. I personally support the Department of Health in its original decision. The hon. Gentleman is right in his comment about the lobsters, but it is made with the benefit of hindsight. However, I make the point that we have not yet received clarification in respect of crabs. My latest information is that crabs are still banned because there was at least one fairly high reading.

At the same time, I have great sympathy with the fishermen concerned. The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed will agree that the lesson to be drawn is that the Department of Health was not at fault but the Ministry of Agriculture. Although the Department of Health was responsible for issuing notices and giving advice, the Ministry of Agriculture had the responsibility for making the tests on the shellfish. The confusion that arose between the two Departments was outrageous. I shall indicate the extent of the confusion by quoting verbatim a Department of Health spokesman:

"The poison levels are very high. If people eat infected shellfish, they could end up in a large box being carried by six people."

That is a fairly explicit and graphic warning. On the same day, the Ministry of Agriculture said that it was not treating the outbreak as a serious scare. I merely put those two statements to the House. Need I say more?

The Department of Health warned my local authority on Saturday 26 May that lobsters, crabs and prawns could

present a potential health hazard. The Ministry of Agriculture was telling fishermen in my constituency that there was nothing wrong with lobsters, crabs and prawns.

Mr. Dorrell *indicated dissent.*

Dr. Clark: That is what was said. The Ministers may deny that, and they may deny the official statements from the two Departments concerned as well. However, if they check, they will be able to confirm my claim. The statement from the Department of Health is even pinned up on the wall of the press office there because they are so proud of it, it was so clear—and I think that it was a particularly good statement.

Although my local authority, through the generosity of the fishermen, had samples of lobsters, crabs and prawns available, it was told by the Ministry of Agriculture that those samples could not be sent to Weymouth to be analysed because it was a bank holiday. They could not be despatched until the 6 o'clock train from Newcastle station by Red Star the following Tuesday. Here we are, talking about a matter of life and death, as the Department of Health acknowledged, yet there was no means of transporting samples from Newcastle to Weymouth because it was a bank holiday. It was farcical. It is about time that the Government got their act together.

Worse still, the Ministry of Agriculture told my local authority that, if the samples were received by Tuesday, as they were, it could have the results the following day and then clarify the position with the local fishermen. However, although the results of the test were given to the press on Thursday night, they were not received by my local authority until 14.18 hours on the Friday. For seven working days, although samples were available, there were no results of tests to be had. The fishermen, who voluntarily withheld their stocks, lost a considerable sum of money.

I accept that the Department of Health's action was right, but when there are mix-ups of the kind I have described, and when two Departments work at odds with each other, there is an incredibly strong argument for ex gratia payments. I hope that the Government will examine that aspect.

I laboured that point, and went through it in some detail because it highlights the sort of difficulty that the hon. Member for York put forward, but there are better ways of tackling the problem than the way that he is suggesting.

I am sometimes accused by the Government and Conservative Members of not always seeing eye to eye with the Government. That is no surprise.

We considered how the new arrangements would operate if there was a serious food scare, such as Chernobyl. It is clear that if clause 14 had been operative in 1986, we would not have had any restricted areas after the Chernobyl incident and that would have been a mistake.

My judgment and that of the Labour party is that, after reflection, the insertion of clause 14 in the other place was a mistake. I say unequivocally that we feel that the Government are right to seek to withdraw the clause. We shall support the Government on amendment 10. It is sensible and it puts the balance where it belongs—on the side of public health—and we support that.

Mr. Gill: In supporting amendment No. 22, I must declare an interest in the food industry. My hon. Friend will be aware of the serious concern in the food and farming industries that clause 14 should remain part of the Bill. It was inserted with all-party support in the other place, and has one straightforward principle—when the Government impose emergency restrictions to protect the public from a food or health hazard, any person who can subsequently show that their products were not affected by pollution or contamination should be compensated in respect of losses caused by emergency restrictions.

A recent example is the case of contaminated cattle feed. A number of farmers are likely to have suffered losses as a result of restrictions placed on them by Government emergency orders, yet can show that they were not in receipt of any of the contaminated feed.

I am not saying that the Government should be inhibited in any way from making full use of emergency powers to protect public interest. My concern is to protect the interests of those persons who inevitably get hurt in emergencies, but who subsequently are unable to establish a legal claim to recover their losses.

Clause 14 is all about compensation for producers and processors who may suffer losses as a result of Government emergency action to protect food safety. It would require the Government to pay compensation to a producer who could demonstrate to a justice of the peace that he had been incorrectly included in Government emergency action to protect food safety, and had suffered losses as a result.

Clause 14 is intended to ensure that Government powers are accompanied by Government responsibility in cases in which it is established after the event that action has extended to persons unconnected with any public health risk. For example, the Government may throw down a blanket of emergency action, much wider than sources of health risk, and in the process smother businesses totally unrelated to the risk. Such businesses should be entitled to compensation.

As it stands, the Bill makes provision for compensation for any depreciation in the value of food wrongly seized, but makes no allowance for any additional cost that a company might incur to replace the consignment seized. If food with a long shelf life is wrongly seized, the company may receive no compensation because no depreciation is allowed, but could incur substantial extra costs fulfilling an important order. It could have a major impact on businesses which, due to the seizure of the goods, would be unable to fulfill an export contract which might have been put against specific letters of credit. The company would not only lose the value of that order, but could sustain significant damage to longer term sales development in the fiercely competitive international food market. A similar situation applies in the domestic market, where retail and domestic customers require continuity. In many instances stocks could be replaced in the short term, due to the required incubation period of some products.

I know that my hon. Friend the Minister will argue that the industry could take out insurance cover. My hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) has instanced the evidence of the Association of British Insurers which has pointed out that such insurance would be difficult to arrange and extremely expensive. He compared it, appropriately, with trying to purchase malicious product tamper cover.

In summary, I urge my hon. Friend to state clearly that he accepts that it is inherent in the use of emergency powers that innocent parties may suffer irrecoverable

[Mr. Gill]

losses, that he is prepared to consider the matter further and does not rule out the possibility of future legislation on the matter and that in the meantime he will look sympathetically at any cases which may arise in the use of emergency powers with a view to making ex gratia payments.

9.30 pm

Mr. Beith: I was concerned to learn that the Government wanted to get rid of clause 14, which was added to the Bill in another place. Obviously, there is a case for looking again at some aspects of clause 14—the specific way in which proof of damage is shown and the scope of the clause. I would extend the scope to cover the circumstances referred to by the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) which arose in the fishing industry during the recent shellfish scare, which still continues, although I hope that the stormy nights will clear the algae completely and will end the red tide and the mussel poisoning for quite some time. On that basis, I am prepared to put up with a couple more stormy nights.

The fishermen did not simply withhold stocks from the market; they saw the market drop severely for some time. It is inevitable that such incidents have a considerable effect on the market. The greatest problem was that the traditional ban on mussels, which occurs when the Government become aware of high toxins in mussels and quite rightly give quick notification, was extended much more widely than usual. It was extended by the Department of Health in quite strict and formal terms to crustaceans such as lobsters, crabs and prawns, although the Ministry had no evidence that there were high levels of toxins in any of those crustaceans. It is still not clear that there were high or dangerous toxins in lobsters, crabs or prawns, but fishermen were unable to market those products although there was no danger to human consumption and the levels of toxins which were found were still within the accepted safety levels. Therefore, there is at least a case to be considered that the advice went far wider than was necessary.

Perhaps the terms of the clause would not cover that, as advice was given on some products that were not covered by formal notices. But the effect is the same and the damage to fishermen's interests was considerable.

When the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, who was unfortunately described as one of the Minister's aides when he appeared in a photograph captioned:

"The Agriculture Minister surrounded by his aides",

went to York on Saturday, no doubt he had to answer the question that has been put to me: why is it that, when a Minister makes a statement and gives a misleading impression of the extent of salmonella in eggs with a disastrous effect on the market, the Minister resigns and compensation is paid to producers, but when advice is given which goes far wider than appears to have been necessary and many fishermen suffer damage to their livelihood no compensation whatsoever is paid and the Government find the idea inconceivable? I was glad that the clause was raised for discussion tonight because it gives Ministers an opportunity to offer some explanation, as fishermen will look at the Bill and say that we need such provisions and that they should apply in such cases.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: That must manifestly be the case because many producers are one-person businesses or very small groups of fishermen with no capital resources to carry them over a week or two to complete loss of income and having to throw away their catches.

Nobody is saying that the Government should be immune from making mistakes. Of course, they could not be. Nor is anybody saying that the Government should not take action to preserve and safeguard public health for fear of making mistakes.

The proposition is different. It is that, because there is bound to be a certain amount of error in safeguarding the public health, the cost of that should fall on the public purse and not on the private resources of the individuals or small groups of producers who are the victims of error.

In putting clause 14 into the Bill, the House of Lords recognised that such a situation exists and that it cries out for remedy. If there were a Government amendment to prescribe a different form of valuation for loss, we should be prepared to consider it on its merits. However, I cannot find on the amendment paper any substitute, but merely a bald removal of clause 14, and that is not acceptable.

Mr. McCartney: For the past two and a half years, the hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory) and I have been involved regularly in cross-party matters in relation to consumer safety and to general consumer issues. We have been working with the manufacturers of products in attempting to improve the presentation and quality of materials in products. Where that has not been satisfactory, we have worked with Government Departments to improve the regulation of certain activities to ensure that the consumer is purchasing material that is safe to use.

Amendment No. 22 has been accompanied by a considerable amount of correspondence from those of us who have food producers in our constituencies. One of the biggest food producers in Europe, if not the world—Heinz—has a food processing factory in my constituency. Less than two years ago, the company went through the trauma of malicious tampering with its products. I tend to use the phrase "food terrorism". There was a criminal attempt to extort from that company and others several million pounds. I cannot go into detail about the action taken in case a court case is pending.

The company lost several million pounds of sales. It had to introduce new production techniques and equipment costing millions of pounds. The factory had to provide failsafe measures; it had to introduce new caps for baby food, and new training and security measures for staff in the factory. Even now, all that has not led to a complete restoration of the company's market share for the products involved. Those events led to copycat actions against Heinz and other companies.

I have a great deal of sympathy for those in the industry who argue that when malicious action is taken, whether it is committed for personal gain or through a failure to follow procedures in legislation, there should be some recompense. Such malicious action is light years away from criminal activity and from the activities of professionally trained, well-organised members of staff who are promoting food safety work, such as environmental health officers and members of professional associations. I have sympathy with what the hon. Member for York said about what can happen as a result of criminal activity and about what can happen when a

Government have to take emergency action and, in doing so, catch in the net people who were not involved. However, that is dealt with under clause 14.

Amendment No. 22 deals with attempts by local authority officers to maintain the highest possible standards of inspection and, when necessary, to seize food that is suspected of being unfit for human consumption. Local health authority officers will be involved in two types of activities, one of which relates to tinned and non-perishable goods. An officer must prove that there is good cause for the action that he is taking and give positive proof that there is a danger to the public. When there is positive proof, it is important that he tries to obtain the voluntary withholding of goods until further action is taken to prove whether the goods pose a danger to public health.

However, matters are more difficult when it comes to fresh and perishable goods. As the hon. Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) said, when action is taken in relation to tinned foods there is not the same loss if a product is found to be safe at a later date, because tinned food is not perishable. With fresh and perishable foods, as the hon. Member for York said, if an officer's decision is proved to be wrong, manufacturers may attempt to seek compensation. I have worries about the way in which that case has been put forward.

I have always been interested in consumer and food safety, from the point of view not only of consuming food but of the good name of the companies concerned and the dramatic effect on companies if they fail to follow proper failsafe procedures. If a local authority must take action, there will be a consequent effect on the company's good name. If there is any doubt, an officer can take some goods for proper checking, with the consent of the company. Only if a company does not voluntarily take its product off the market should an officer use seizure powers.

Seizure powers are not new to this legislation—they have been available since 1956 under the Food and Drugs Act. I have heard no evidence this evening—perhaps hon. Members who support the amendment can provide it—that, since 1955, local authority officers have misused their powers in such a way that seizures have had adverse effects on companies. I know of no major case in which a local authority had acted irresponsibly or unreasonably in relation to its seizure powers under the 1955 Act to protect the public from exposure to food that was unfit for human consumption. It is up to the hon. Member for York and his colleagues to provide evidence of abuse if I am to have sympathy for their case.

It is important also that good professional officers should endeavour to encourage companies voluntarily to impound products pending further investigation. On the very few occasions that such action must be taken, it is important that officials work with companies on a confidential and voluntary basis to ensure that the local authority's action is prudent and in the interests of consumers and is not detrimental to a company's good name or activities.

In my view, only if a company is unreasonable and refuses to co-operate with the local authority officers should those local authority officers take the powers available to them under the current Act to protect the public. It is vital that local authority officers are not encumbered and that public safety measures should put the public and the consumer first.

Therefore, although I am sympathetic to the views expressed by Conservative Members—and some Opposition Members—I believe that the amendment would be detrimental to the work of those professional public safety officers who do not work in the same way as criminals who attempt to attack companies for their own financial gain. Those public safety officers work with companies every day to try to protect the public from any contaminated food reaching the shelves of our shops. That should be a major priority for those who support the consumers and the companies that sustain employment in our constituencies. The best thing for their future development is public confidence in the products that they produce. That is best achieved by a regular, professional working relationship between the companies and the local authority departments. The amendment does nothing to enhance that relationship. It builds a barrier between us and them on the pretext that local authority health workers are in opposition to the food production companies. That is not my experience, and I do not believe that it is the experience of any hon. Member.

9.45 pm

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): My only connection with the food industry is as a hotelier, but that gives me a vested interest in safe food.

If this debate had taken place three weeks ago, I should not have had the slightest hesitation supporting the Government's proposals to remove clause 14, which was inserted in the other place. However, unlike the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) and in support of the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) our experience of the way in which the Department of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food have over-reacted with regard to toxins caused by algae in mussels has made me come to the conclusion that provisions such as clause 14 are needed to protect farmers, fishermen, traders and even restaurateurs from the overcautiousness and in some cases the misjudgments not only of the Department of Health, but of any other Ministry or public body. In such circumstances, traders, farmers and fishermen have the right to protection.

In my view, the two Ministries went over the top in this case by giving public health warnings not only for mussels, for which I readily accept that there was ample justification and evidence, but for all shellfish, including prawns, lobsters and crabs. They included other shellfish before they had the slightest shred of evidence that those species were affected by toxic levels that would cause poisoning to the public and before tests had been carried out.

That is a dangerous precedent. If we ban food before we have evidence of any danger, the French could—and have—done the same thing. They could ban our food saying, "We think that there is something wrong with it. We do not have any evidence, but we shall ban it until we have proof."

We have had a problem with algae in the north-east for many years, although until recently it has not come as far down as the Humber. I understand from Professor Edwards, who was, I believe, a scientist with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food before moving to the Shellfish Association of Great Britain, that there have never been any cases of such toxic poisoning from lobsters, prawns or crabs.

[Mr. John Townend]

The problem has been the enormous amount of publicity on food safety. We have had salmonella and mad cow disease. I think that the Ministry panicked and issued warnings about lobsters and prawns which have subsequently been proved to be completely unnecessary. In such cases, Her Majesty's Government have a moral responsibility to compensate fishermen, traders and restaurateurs who have suffered financially from that overreaction.

We are told that traces of the toxins have been found in a few crabs. Last week, because of the problems of fishermen at Bridlington, I rang the Ministry of Health every day for a daily report. I can confirm one thing that the hon. Member for South Shields said: one does not get far on a bank holiday weekend. It perturbed me that after the bank holiday weekend I tried to get through to the Ministry on Tuesday. There was no reply from the private office. Everyone was on holiday, so I rang the duty officer. I could not get through to the duty officer. I got through to the telephonist who said that there were five calls holding. I said that I would leave my number for him to ring back when he was free. She said that she had instructions not to do that and that the officer could not ring people back. I said, "But I am a Member of Parliament." She said that it made no difference.

If the Government had thought that there was a possibility that for the first time ever the toxin would affect lobsters, crabs and prawns in addition to mussels, they should not have made an announcement but should immediately have taken samples and had them analysed within 24 hours. If they had obtained evidence of a public danger, it would have been right and proper to issue a public warning.

We must be careful that we do not become obsessed with food safety. People have stopped eating beef because of mad cow disease, chickens and eggs because of salmonella, soft cheese because of listeria and now we have a public warning about shellfish. On Saturday night I had a dinner party at which I served scallops and good English roast beef and no one was any the worse for it. [HON. MEMBERS: "So far."]

Every day that I rang the Ministry of Health, it was still testing crabs and still had not found toxin levels above the danger limit. It seems that having made a mistake, the Ministry desperately continued testing more crabs to prove that it was right. I was told by Professor Edwards that 400 crabs were tested and only four or five were found to have a level of toxin. If those figures are wrong, I shall be grateful if the Minister will give the right figures to the House.

The two Ministries have not acted satisfactorily on this matter. It will never come out, but I have the feeling that if it had been left to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food there would have been a warning on mussels and nothing else. I believe that the Department of Health went over the top.

I do not see why the mistakes and overreactions of the Government should be at the expense of my constituents, particularly fishermen. Opposition Members who have fishing constituencies know that fishermen on the north-east coast have had a bad year because the quotas have been reduced. This is the last straw. I believe that there should be some compensation in this case. I hope that the Government will consider it. The legislation does not exist to deal with that. I agree with the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed that the matter would not be covered by the new clause. I shall not support the Government in removing the new clause that was inserted in another place unless they give an undertaking to provide an alternative to it.

Mr. Martlew: I shall be brief. I am always worried when spokesmen on the two Front Benches agree and the Back Benches on the Government side begin to fill up. I can usually smell vested interests and that is the case now. We are having a strange debate. The Government took a decision. I wonder what would have happened if they had decided to say nothing and people had died. I wonder what hon. Members would have said. If one of his constituents had died, I am sure that the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) would have said exactly the opposite of what he said tonight. That is typical of a Liberal. He wants it both ways.

Mr. Beith: Can the hon. Gentleman give a single case of anyone who died as a result of eating lobsters or crabs which had ingested toxins as a result of algal blooms at any time in history?

Mr. Martlew: It obviously makes the hon. Gentleman very bad-tempered. I can give an example of an alternative scenario involving corned beef. It was in Aberdeen. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman is being crabby but we shall have to put up with it. Someone said that there was an outbreak of salmonella, but in fact it was typhoid. About 20 people died and the corned beef industry was destroyed for a generation. If action had not been taken on shellfish and people had died, the crab and lobster fishing industry would not have suffered a hiccup; it would have been destroyed. That would have been a crime.

If there was any neglect on the Government's part in not having the tests carried out, the fishermen affected should be compensated, but we must always err on the side of caution to protect the industry in the long term as well to protect the consumer.

People argue that if a mistake is made in the advice given, the private sector should not be expected to pay; rather the public should. I accept that, but the public already pay for the inspection of factories and the tests that are carried out when things go wrong. I believe that the food industry should pay for the inspections carried out on their factories and any illness suffered by the public from their products. Often those companies do not volunteer to pay money to people who have suffered from food poisoning. The argument always seems to be that if it has anything to do with business the public should pay, but when it comes to social security people are expected to manage on what they receive.

I believe that the Government acted in the best interests of the industry in the long term by being cautious. The day that environmental health departments hold back or Ministries delay in case their decision might cost money will be the day we have a tragedy.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): I have some difficulty coming down on one side or the other having read all the briefings. I have reached a conclusion, but it has been difficult having heard the arguments on both sides. It is not an easy or simple matter, as one must have already concluded from the speeches of the hon. Member

for South Shields (Dr. Clark) and my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend), whose views were diametrically opposed.

On balance, if I were the Minister, I would be seeking to have clause 14 removed from the Bill. In food emergencies the Government are in a no-win situation. The shellfish example demonstrates that. I have a great deal of respect and affection for my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington, but I profoundly disagree with him in this instance.

The Government are often criticised on food matters for not taking a robust enough line. But some hon. Members, regardless of party, may say that they have taken an unnecessarily robust one. On balance, the Government must be able to introduce emergency food measures uninfluenced by whether compensation may have to be paid if they make a mistake. They must act on the advice of their food scientists uninfluenced by how much it will cost the taxpayer to provide compensation. The Government would be thought to be acting in bad faith if they took no action bearing in mind the fact that compensation might follow. Their critics would argue that they had taken no action, not because of bad advice, but because of the possible financial consequences.

Often the necessary action that is taken immediately might, with hindsight, be proved to be more than absolutely necessary. Recently we have been in dispute with our European partners about beef. Our food exporting industry requires and demands that we take action on food safety grounds alone. If clause 14 was in place, that confidence would be undermined. Sometimes action must be taken which, with hindsight, would be excessive, but we must not leave a Minister feeling that he cannot responsibly take a certain course because of the consequences.

If the Government are found to be acting capriciously, that is a matter of maladministration, a matter for the ombudsman and a matter for ex gratia payment. I hope that when he replies, the Minister will say that, should that be the case, ex gratia payment would follow.

Where I part company with what I believe to be the views of the Minister is in his hope that the matter can be covered by insurance. The NFU rightly says——

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting the Food Safety *[Lords]* Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Fallon.]*

As amended (in the Standing Committee), again considered.

Question again proposed, That the amendment be made.

Mr. Alexander: We understand from the NFU that there is no appropriate compensation against losses of the sort contemplated. The insurance industry says that compensation is possible, but that there would be a very heavy premium. If the NFU recognises the Minister's dilemma, will he, in turn, recognise the NFU's and possibly introduce a fund or scheme which may compensate producers who are in the position that would otherwise be dealt with by clause 14? The producers' campaign must be seriously addressed. Discussions must take place with the Country Landowners' Association and the NFU to resolve the problem. In that light, I shall be supporting the removal of clause 14.

Mr. Dorrell: I have seldom agreed with my hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) so much as I did when he said that the issues raised by this debate were difficult for the House to decide. The matters which we have been discussing for the past 45 minutes or so raise some difficult and fundamental issues with which I will deal in as orderly a way as possible.

I must at the outset separate the three issues that the House has been addressing in this debate. The first is that raised by the amendment in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory)—whether the compensation payable under the terms of clause 9 should be restricted in the way proposed by the draft or whether they should be extended in the way proposed by my hon. Friend. The second issue is whether the Government should be liable for compensation for emergency orders issued under clause 13. The third is the handling of the shellfish issues in the past fortnight.

First, on the two compensation issues, the Government have considered carefully the matters that were raised in Committee. Despite the important arguments that were advanced, we have decided to seek the consent of the House to the Bill as originally drafted and that compensation should, therefore, be limited to the amount by which the food depreciates during the time that it is subject to the order issued by the environmental health officer.

The amendment seeks to extend the scale of compensation payable by allowing the owner of food to claim other costs, damages and expenses incurred directly. The first question raised by that concept is what is covered by the definition of "direct cost." Before coming into the House I was employed in business and was present at many theological debates about the nature of direct cost. To include in a statute the provision that the owner of food should be entitled to compensation based on direct cost raises problems and poses more questions than it answers.

The Bill contains important safeguards about the way in which an environmental health officer should use the powers granted to him by the Bill. The most important of those safeguards is that no action that he can take under clause 9 can be made to stick unless he can convince a justice of the peace to support him within 21 days. If he cannot so convince a JP, compensation under the limited terms provided by the Bill becomes payable. That is an important safeguard.

My hon. Friend the Member for York said that he does not think that the risk of the wider definition of cost would be insurable. The Government have taken advice from the insurance industry and our advice is to the contrary. The insurance industry assures us that in principle these risks are insurable and that the industry is willing to listen to any serious and properly backed proposition which the food industry will make for insuring the wider risk that my hon. Friend seeks to cover.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: As a letter read out by my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) made clear, what may be available to a very large firm which is already insured, as an extension of that insurance, is wholly different from what may be available to a fisherman or a small group of fishermen who have not been insured for risks of this kind before and are trying to do so per de novo. What is the Government's advice about that? I am not talking about finance.

Mr. Dorrell: I accept the force of my hon. Friend's argument. It is, of course, true that an insurance broker will assess the risk of each proposition that is put to him. No broker can accept on the same terms all risks that are put to him. The advice stands that in principle the risk is insurable. That is the key point that the House should bear in mind.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol. North-West): I have an indirect interest in this matter because I am a partner in a firm which has an insurance interest. My hon. Friend says that an insurance broker will quote for a risk. Most insurance brokers can quote for any risk, but they can make sure that no insurance is offered by quoting a premium which makes the risk totally uninsurable. Will my hon. Friend the Minister write to my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) giving the range of insurance premiums that have been quoted to him?

Mr. Dorrell: I hesitate to set myself up as a sort of poor man's insurance broker, because I am not sure that that is a proper course of employment for a Minister of the Crown. This is not the only basis on which we are seeking to persuade the House to reject my hon. Friend's amendment. The key point is that this is an insurable risk, but that it would be on different terms for different customers.

Mr. Gregory: My hon. Friend lays great stress on the point that this is an insurable risk. Before coming to the House I was careful to check my sources, the Association of British Insurers and a Lloyd's broker. Will my hon. Friend reveal to the House his sources in the insurance market because they are plainly at variance with the leading insurance association and the Lloyd's broker? This is an uninsurable risk. My hon. Friend the Minister spoke about direct costs. Surely that is a matter not for the House but for the interpretation of the courts.

Mr. Dorrell: The source of our advice on the insurability of risk is members of the council of Lloyd's. I take my hon. Friend's point about the definition of direct cost, which has some force, but before putting it on the statute book the House should consider how easy it would be to apply such a proposition.

It is also right to draw the attention of the House to the fact that the Government are committed to setting up an implementation advisory committee which will be asked to advise on the code of practice for enforcement authorities covering the detention of food. Interested parties will be able to comment on the draft code before it is finalised and the code will cover use of the powers contained in clause 9.

The other issue covered in the debate was whether the Government should be liable to compensate for losses arising as a result of the exercise of their powers under clause 13. I am grateful to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) for the support that he offered for the Government's central case on this subject, but he also charged that there was confusion between my Department and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food as a result of the shellfish incident which started over the bank holiday weekend. I was involved in the consultations over that weekend and the following week. There was no confusion between Departments. Those who attack the way the Departments acted on the grounds of confusion often cannot define whether they want to attack us for sloth or for being over-zealous. That charge cannot be levelled against my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend). He is clear as to why he is unhappy about the way in which the powers were used, as was the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith).

It may assist our deliberations on these issues if I announce that we are withdrawing our warning against the eating of crabs caught between the Humber and Montrose. This decision has been taken in the light of further extensive tests by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on crabs caught off the coastline from the Humber to Montrose, which have shown in the majority of cases that there is no measurable toxin present. In about 10 per cent. of samples where toxin was found in crab meat, it was at levels that posed no risk to human health. The Department of Health's advice on not eating crab is therefore withdrawn.

Further tests on molluscan shellfish have shown that current levels of toxin are such that the public must, until further notice, continue to refrain from eating them. Consequently, the warning about molluscan shellfish such as mussels, winkles, whelks, oysters and scallops caught between the Humber and Montrose remains.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): What about cockles?

Mr. Dorrell: I think that cockles are covered by the warning. The Department of Health, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Scottish Office are continuing to monitor the situation closely and will lift the warning on molluscan shellfish as soon as it is safe to do so.

Mr. Beith: I am grateful for that welcome announcement. Although the Ministry may have acted in good faith in believing that it was prudent to warn against eating all these species, as it is now clear that it was not at any time dangerous to do so, will the Under-Secretary ask the Ministry to consider again the point that the fishermen are making?

Mr. Dorrell: The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed misses the point. When the warning was issued we could not reasonably have reached that conclusion. The hon. Gentleman has asked—as did my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington—why those species were included in the warning. That was because they eat shellfish such as mussels, and could therefore ingest the toxin. We felt that that was the prudent course of action, and was in the interests of the health of the public. Besides, as the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) pointed out, credibility is in the long-term interest of the industry.

10.15 pm

In the interests of the public, we concluded that it was right to issue warnings covering crustacea, as well as mussels and other shellfish. I ask the House to consider what the attitude of hon. Members and the public would have been if we had later found out that those species contained high toxin levels, and our explanation was that we had not found an example on that bank holiday Saturday. It is well known that crabs and lobsters feed on the species that were the subject of the warning and it would have been irresponsible of the Government not to include those species in the original warning.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): Our point is not that the Government acted irresponsibly in being cautious about crabs and lobsters. Opposition Members have made it clear that we accept that the precautionary principle should apply when there is an element of doubt. However, nearly two weeks have passed. Can the Minister confirm that at no time have levels of toxin in crabs been over the danger level in that period? Will he futher confirm that there was a delay of seven days in testing samples of crab meat? On that basis, the fishermen deserve an ex gratia payment.

Mr. Dorrell: The hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington have asked about toxin levels in crabs. As the House knows, the safe level—established over many years—is 400 units. Toxin levels of up to 317 units were found in crabs during the testing period in 10 per cent. of the samples taken. In the case of lobsters, toxin levels of up to 227 units were found in 10 per cent. of the samples taken. Both those figures are under 400, but are levels of toxin that could give some cause for concern. After all, no level of toxin is a particularly nutritious food.

Given the background of risk—that those species feed on other species in which very high levels of toxin were found—I feel that the Government have taken the correct decision.

Mr. John Townend: Can the Minister assure the House that the Government will learn from the experience this year, and that, if next year high levels of toxin in mussels again require a public warning, such a warning will not be given for lobsters, prawns and crabs unless tests have been made that show levels of toxin that are dangerous to the public?

Mr. Dorrell: I am happy to give an assurance that Ministers will always try to learn from their experiences. I cannot give a blanket assurance that we will never again issue a warning in similar circumstances against lobsters and crabs, but we shall seek to learn from the experiences of the past fortnight.

Government amendment No. 10 would remove clause 14 from the Bill. There are several reasons for that. First, I ask the House to consider the position in which the Government would be if the Bill were passed unamended. They would be in an extraordinary position: if they issued an order that was ultra vires, no compensation would be payable. It is well known—and has been for many years—that compensation is not payable in those circumstances. If we issued an order beyond our powers, no compensation would be payable. However, if we issued an order within our powers which was later found to be unjustified, compensation would be payable. It is rather odd to pass legislation that puts the Government in a better position if they act beyond their powers than if they act within their powers.

I take seriously the argument that the Bill, if unamended, would be a serious disincentive to action by Ministers. We must preserve the position of Ministers acting when necessary to protect the consumer. One Opposition Member made the rather telling point that we must deal not only with the substance, but with the appearance. If the Government, in a marginal case, did not issue an order, the suspicion could always be roused—even if it were unfounded—that that decision was reached because of the fear of the cost consequences. We must be clear that no Government would fail to issue an order, which otherwise they should issue, simply because they were concerned about the compensation consequences.

There is a distinction between the obligations of central Government and those of local government in the context of paying compensation. It is already an established precedent under the Consumer Protection Act 1987, where a clear distinction is made. Local authorities are liable to compensation in certain circumstances, but central Government most certainly are not. Furthermore, it is not true to say that there are no existing remedies for innocent parties who suffer loss. It will often be possible to require the person responsible for the imminent threat which was the cause of the action to pay damages. It is for the courts to decide the extent of liability. Of course, where the Government have made an administrative error, ex gratia payments to cover losses incurred by those subject to restrictions can be made.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newark asked whether we would be prepared to establish a scheme under which ex gratia payments could be made. It was ironic that, at that very moment, my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury came through the door behind Mr. Speaker's Chair. I wonder whether, were he to agree to such a scheme, he might impose a cash limit upon it. I do not think that my hon. Friend's proposal is the right way to deal with ex gratia payments. They need to be dealt with on the merits of each case, without being bound by the rules of a scheme. Government action is also subject both to judicial review and to examination by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration when maladministration is alleged.

I hope that I have advanced arguments that will persuade the House that it would be wrong to accept amendment No. 22. I hope that the House will feel it appropriate to support Government amendment No. 10, which would eliminate clause 14.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 12

EMERGENCY PROHIBITION NOTICES AND ORDERS

Mr. Robert Hicks (Cornwall, South-East): I beg to move amendment No. 15, in page 10, leave out lines 21 to 25.

Mr. Speaker: With this we may discuss the following amendments: No. 16, in page 10, line 27, leave out 'such an officer' and insert

'an authorised officer of an enforcement authority'.

No. 17, in page 10, line 34, at end insert

'and any person to whom such notice is given shall, if he attends before the court or sheriff upon the application, be entitled to be heard and to call witnesses'.

No. 18, in page 10, leave out lines 39 to 43.

No. 19, in page 11, leave out lines 6 to 11.

No. 20, in page 11, line 12, leave out 'emergency prohibition notice or'.

No. 21, in page 11, leave out lines 25 to 38.

Mr. Hicks: The amendment stands in the name of 25 right hon. and hon. Members and myself. I declare an interest, in that for the past 15 years I have acted as the parliamentary adviser to the British Hotels, Restaurants and Caterers Association. I also represent a constituency in which the tourist industry makes a significant contribution to the local economy.

[Mr. Hicks]

The amendments relate to the proposed procedures outlined in clause 12 for dealing with food business premises if it is suggested that they present an imminent risk of danger to health.

We are all conscious of the need for a high level of food safety and high standards of hygiene. The public demand that and Parliament is right to respond. The small minority of dirty caterers must be eliminated. They endanger the health of the nation and they do their industry no good whatever.

However, I, along with a number of my hon. Friends, question the envisaged change in the procedures which is designed to secure the objectives that we all seek. Under existing legislation, local authority enforcement officers have to obtain a court order before a food business may be closed. That is completely consistent with long-established legal procedures.

However, clause 12 seeks to reverse those procedures. Under the proposals, an enforcement officer may serve an emergency prohibition notice on the proprietor of a food business if he is satisfied that it represents an imminent risk or a danger to health. Subsequently, that officer must apply to the magistrates court within three days for an emergency prohibition order and he must give the proprietor at least one day's notice of his intention to do so. The proprietor will then have the right to appear in court and to call witnesses to contest the application.

I accept that if the enforcement officer does not make the application to the court following the issuing of the initial notice, or if the court refuses to make an order confirming the prohibition notice, the local authority has to compensate the proprietor for any loss that he has sustained as a consequence of complying with the closure notice. But how is the level of that compensation to be determined? It would clearly be inadequate if the figure were simply to be on the basis of loss of earnings during the three days in question. In practice, there could be longer-term losses. If premises have to be closed, there will be adverse local publicity. For example, the enforced closure of, let us say, Stephen's bistro could have long-term effects on that business.

In a parliamentary answer dated 5 April 1990 the Department of Health provided figures which show that over the past decade the percentage of successful prosecutions for breaches of the food hygiene regulations in the hotel and catering industry varied from 94 per cent. in 1980 and 1987-88 to 75 per cent. in 1986-87. Put another way, the average annual rate of unsuccessful prosecutions over the past 10 years had been one in 10 and in 1986-87 it was one in four. I think that my hon. Friend the Minister will agree that that gives rise to genuine anxieties and emphasises the need for a second opinion from the magistrates before an establishment may be closed down.

10.30 pm

My hon. Friend the Minister stated that it is his intention to establish an implementation advisory committee on codes of practice designed to produce even standards of enforcement of the Bill's provisions. If he is not prepared this evening to reverse the proposed procedures—and in his letter to me of 3 May my hon. Friend's predecessor as Minister acknowledged that environmental health officers will be given strong powers, which he described as a very powerful weapon—the role of the advisory committee will become even more critical.

It is essential that there is consistency of application and important that the circumstances in which the powers might be used are clearly and tightly drawn. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to give me such a reassurance this evening.

My hon. Friend's predecessor also indicated that he would be happy to include the British Hotels, Restaurants and Caterers Association in the consultation process for determining the codes of conduct. The association welcomes that, but would feel far more confident if it was represented on the advisory committee itself—as the Institution of Environmental Health Officers will be. I trust that my hon. Friend the Minister will give that request sympathetic consideration.

All that the amendments would achieve is that the proprietor of a food business will be given an opportunity to present his case to a magistrates court before his business can be closed.

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend is understandably concerned about the draconian power included in clause 12 to close a business without reference to the courts. I acknowledge that it is an extremely severe power, and we must ensure, as my hon. Friend said, that it is used only in tightly controlled circumstances.

Under clause 12, an environmental health officer may serve an emergency prohibition notice on the owner of an insanitary food business if it presents an imminent—and that is the key word—risk to health. The prohibition notice takes effect immediately, but the EHO must apply to a magistrates court, or to a sheriff court in Scotland, within three days for an emergency prohibition order, and must give the proprietor one day's notice of his intention to do so.

My hon. Friend's amendment would insist that the environmental health officer applies to the court before the notice comes into effect. I shall seek to explain to the House why that is not the correct way, and why it is important that the power contained in clause 12 proceeds on to the statute book.

If any EHO does not apply to the court within three days the notice lapses, and then the right to compensation arises. If the EHO applies, the proprietor will have the right to appear in court and to call witnesses to contest the application. If the court refuses to make an order confirming the prohibition, the authority is required to pay compensation. If the notice does not for any reason convert itself into an order, the owner of the food business will be entitled to compensation.

My hon. Friend asked how the compensation will be calculated. Clause 12 provides for compensation for "any loss suffered." Any dispute will go to arbitration, and if the parties cannot agree on an arbitrator, it will fall to a High Court judge to appoint one under the conditions of the Arbitration Act 1894. The key point is that compensation will be payable if it later transpires that the power was used in circumstances that a court would not support.

The second point to emphasise is that the power is necessary because we are talking only about circumstances where there is an imminent risk to health. Also, in most circumstances, where an environmental health officer believes that there is an imminent risk to health, he will not need to use these powers because experience suggests that

he will be able to get voluntary agreement from the operator of the business. However, occasionally, when the operator of the business will not agree, the EHO must have the power to take the necessary action to close an insanitary business if there is an imminent risk to health.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks) also asked about the details of the implementation advisory committee, which I referred to in the previous debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) announced on 23 November last year that we would be setting up that committee to advise on statutory codes of practice for enforcement officers, designed to ensure even standards of enforcement throughout the country. My hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East has recognised that that committee and the codes of practice that it will issue are very relevant to the proper concerns that owners of food businesses have about the implications of the clause.

The membership of the implementation advisory committee has now been decided, and consists of seven members nominated by local authority associations, two members nominated by the professional organisations most involved, and five representatives from the Government Departments most involved: the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland, and my Department.

My hon. Friend asked about the possibility of representation for people representing the hotel and catering industry, but I think that he will realise from the membership that I have announced that this is an internal committee, within the Government, which will clearly consult widely when exercising its powers. Indeed, it will produce draft codes which will be subject to consultation.

The committee will also consider some issues where input is needed from others who are not full members. In such instances the committee will be able to establish sub-groups to deal with particular issues, and they will be able to co-opt representatives of other organisations where that is appropriate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East also asked about the Committee's terms of reference. They will be to advise the Departments on draft codes of practice to be issued for consultation under section 41 of the Food Safety Bill—covering the execution and enforcement of the Act and regulations and orders made under it.

I hope that on the basis of the wide terms of reference given to the committee, the fact that it will issue codes of practice governing the exercise of powers under clause 12, and the other points that I have made, my hon. Friend will feel able to withdraw his amendment.

Mr. Hicks: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary for his response and especially for his helpful remarks about the terms of reference and workings of the implementation advisory committee. In view of that, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 14

COMPLAINTS ABOUT EMERGENCY CONTROL ORDER

Amendment made: No. 10, in page 12, line 25, leave out clause 14.—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

Clause 19

SPECIAL PROVISIONS FOR PARTICULAR FOODS ETC.

Mr. Maclean: I beg to move amendment No. 5, in page 15, line 5, leave out

'or novel food sources'

and insert

', or food sources from which such foods are intended to be derived,'.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Government amendments Nos. 6 to 8.

Mr. Maclean: This series of amendments clarifies the scope of clause 19. I explained in Committee that we proposed that foods produced by genetic modification should be subject to a positive approval system, based on advice from the Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes, before marketing. I agreed to look at the provisions again.

The amendments will ensure that all foods produced by genetic modification are brought within the scope of clause 19. The amendments specifically provide for regulating the carrying out of commercial operations with such food and I hope that the specific reference to genetic modification on the face of the Bill will be helpful to clarify our intentions.

The House will recall that our announcement in Committee was warmly welcomed by the National Consumer Council, in a press statement from its chairman, Lady Wilcox. It is a sensible series of amendments.

Mr. Morley: I regret that we are discussing such an important issue late at night with little chance to examine the enormous implications of developments on the frontiers of science that affect food and society.

I served on the Committee considering the Environmental Protection Bill and the matter was discussed in great detail, although it was allocated insufficient time because of scheduling. The discussion on genetically modified organisms occurred late at night and there was insufficient time to consider the matter in great depth.

Genetically modified organisms have major implications as well as considerable advantages. Clause 19 provides powers to control the use of food which contains genetically modified organisms or which had been modified. Will the Minister explain how his advisory committee will link in with the proposals in the Environmental Protection Bill? Will he be guided by the release committee? Are the powers in clause 19 fall-back powers to be used as a last-ditch defence, or does he expect the research work and clearance to be covered under the regulations set out in the Environmental Protection Bill?

That raises another question: genetically modified foods may be safe, but are they desirable? Is the Minister confident that such issues are covered by clause 19? Another matter that has been discussed, especially in Europe, involves the so-called fourth hurdle—assessing whether a genetically modified food is safe, meets a particular need and is desirable. We have discussed the way in which BST can increase milk yields, but does society need BST?

One genetically modified food organism has been allowed to go on sale for public use in Britain—genetically modified yeast. I do not doubt that that yeast has undergone the proper vetting procedures and has been considered very carefully, but although it is safe, was that

[Mr. Morley]

form of genetically modified yeast needed or desired? I understand that it was designed for the baking industry. I am informed that the industry never made any request that that form of yeast should be accepted.

Genetically modified organisms raise wider issues for the Food Safety Bill and food regulations. For example, work is already being carried out to modify the naturally produced sugar in plants to produce sugar such as high fructose corn syrup which can replace cane sugar in many food processes. That raises the question whether implications on Third world countries and the sugar cane industry should be taken into consideration. I accept that some issues are outside the scope of the Bill, but we have not given them the detailed consideration that they deserve and we should carefully examine all the implications and consequences.

The amendment deals with IVF. The Government included that issue to make it clear that IVF is an accepted practice within the food industry and should not be caught by the new regulations. However, I am sure that the Minister will accept that much of the research into genetically modified organisms is aimed at animal husbandry and the development of particular animals. Animals may be developed that contain genetic modification and there may be artificial insemination with animals that have not. Is the Minister confident that the amendments will cover the use of sperm that has been genetically modified or is from a genetically modified source in IVF? Under the Bill, that may be acceptable. It is important that that is covered in regulations.

10.45 pm

Mr. Maclean: I can give the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) the assurances he seeks. He asked whether everything was covered by the amendments. It is because we wanted to ensure that everything was covered that we have brought forward these revisions and improved wording.

There are two parts to the role of the Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes. It is concerned with novel foods—that is, foods not previously consumed here—and with novel food processes and food produced by such processes. Novel foods are covered by clause 19 and we are now making specific provision to ensure that all foods produced by genetic modification are covered by that clause. Processes involving novel processes and the food produced by such processes could be regulated if necessary using the separate powers in clause 17(1) (c) and (f).

The hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe asked about our interface with the other committees on genetic modification. I assure him that there is interface and that our provisions slot in nicely with their role. If he wants more detail, I shall be happy to write to him with specific details on how we envisage the way in which the other committees will operate and how they link with the ACNFP.

The hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe also asked me whether sperm would be covered by the group of amendments. Yes, they are. That is a good example of something further back in the chain that is covered.

The one point on which I will not give the hon. Gentleman assurances is on the so-called "fourth hurdle", and the vague and subjective definition of socio-economic need. The amendments are not concerned with that. The role of ACNFP and the role of the amendments is to ensure that genetically modified organisms that may be a food source are safe. I do not want the role of the ACNFP to change radically to include making distinctions on whether it is socially good or nice for consumers to want to have certain products. It should be left to consumers to decide whether they need or want to use a genetically modified yeast. It is the job of the Government to ensure that it is safe; it is the job of consumers to decide whether they want it. I hope that those reassurances are satisfactory to the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 6, in page 15, line 6, after 'regulations', insert—

'(aa) for prohibiting the carrying out of such operations with respect to genetically modified food sources, or foods derived from such food sources, of any class so specified;'.

No. 7, in page 15, line 9, leave out 'either' and insert 'each'.'

No. 8, in page 15, leave out lines 33 and 34 and insert—

'(4) For the purposes of this section a food source is genetically modified if any of the genes or other genetic material in the food source—

(a) has been modified by means of an artificial technique; or

(b) is inherited or otherwise derived, through any number of replications, from genetic material which was so modified;

and in this subsection "artificial technique" does not include any technique which involves no more than, or no more than the assistance of, naturally occurring processes of reproduction (including selective breeding techniques or *in vitro* fertilisation).'—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

Clause 29

PROVISION OF FACILITIES FOR EXAMINATIONS

Amendment made: No. 11, in page 20, line 26, leave out 'in England and Wales, or a regional or islands' and insert ', or a regional'.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

Clause 31

ANALYSIS ETC. OF SAMPLES

Amendments made: No. 12, in page 21, line 17, leave out subsections (3) and (4) and insert—

'(3) If, in any case where a sample is proposed to be submitted for analysis under this section, the office of public analyst for the area in question is vacant, the sample shall be submitted to the public analyst for some other area.

(4) If, in any case where a sample is proposed to be or is submitted for analysis or examination under this section, the food analyst or examiner determines that he is for any reason unable to perform the analysis or examination, the sample shall be submitted or, as the case may be, sent by him to such other food analyst or examiner as he may determine.

(4A) A food analyst or examiner shall analyse or examine as soon as practicable any sample submitted or sent to him under this section, but may, except where—

(a) he is the public analyst for the area in question; and

No. 13, in page 22, line 9, at end insert—

'and where two or more public analysts are appointed for any area, any reference in this section to the public analyst for that area shall be construed as a reference to either or any of them.'—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

Clause 32

REGULATION OF SAMPLING AND ANALYSIS ETC.

Amendments made: No. 29, in page 22, line 12, leave out

'Regulations made under this section'

and insert

'Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (1) above, regulations under that subsection'.

No. 14, in page 22, line 28, after 'examinations', insert—

'(ff) the circumstances in which a food analyst or examiner is to be precluded, by reason of a conflict of interest, from analysing or examining a particular sample or part of a sample;'.

No. 30, in page 22, line 30, after 'examination', insert '(i)'.

No. 31, in page 22, line 32, at end insert

'or

(ii) to a person determined by or under the regulations."—*[Mr. Dorrell.]*

Clause 61

SHORT TITLE, COMMENCEMENT AND EXTENT

Amendment made: No. 24, in page 37, leave out line 26 and insert

'paragraphs 12 to 15 of Schedule 2 and, so far as relating to those paragraphs,'—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

Schedule 4

TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS AND SAVINGS

Amendment made: No. 9, in page 51, line 38, leave out 'coming into force' and insert 'commencement'.—*[Mr. Maclean.]*

Order for Third Reading read [Queen's Consent, on behalf of the Crown, and Prince of Wale's Consent on behalf of the Duchy of Cornwall signified.]

10.48 pm

Mr. Maclean: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

I am confident, and I am sure that all hon. Members will be confident, that we now have before us a Bill that will see us well into the next century. It provides us with a strong and flexible framework that will allow us to tackle specific new problems as they arise. Our main objective has been to ensure the safety of food. We have also taken care not to stifle innovation in food or impose needless burdens on the many small businesses in the food chain. The Bill will, however, require industry to look more critically at its operations, with the safety of the consumer in mind. That is in everyone's interests.

The Bill is of great benefit to consumers. We have introduced tougher penalties. We have taken stronger powers. We have powers to detain batches of suspect food for further investigation and to close premises where there is an imminent risk to health. It is a worthy Bill and I commend it to the House.

10.49 pm

Dr. David Clark: I had hoped that I would be able fully to endorse everything that the Minister said. However, there was one, I hope, slip of the tongue. In his hyperbole he said that we shall be lifting the burden from small businesses. I make it quite clear that, no matter the size of a business, if public health is at risk——

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Curry) *indicated assent.*

Dr. Clark: The Minister is indicating that he is with us.

The Opposition did not vote against the Bill. We had a constructive Committee stage. However, the Bill does not go far enough. As the Minister said, it is an enabling Bill and much progress can be made under it. When we have a Labour Government, we shall go even further.

10.50 pm

Mr. Cohen: I am sorry to spoil Conservative Members' attempts to get this debate over quickly, but I shall make a couple of important points. The Bill misses many opportunities to protect the consumer—for example, an independent food safety agency and a licensing scheme. My two brief points are about the resources to implement the Bill and the distribution of those resources.

First, the Government claim that they will provide about £30 million of what they call real money to implement the Bill. All the local authority associations have said that they need a minimum of £40 million. I still do not think that the Government have cleared up that point. The money that they will provide could easily be swallowed up in the poll tax mess next year—we have a poll tax mess this year—and not go to environmental health officers to enable them to implement the Bill.

Secondly, local authorities with many food production premises such as restaurants and takeaway establishments should have a higher proportion of the money, but that should not be the only basis on which the money is distributed. It certainly should not be distributed purely on a population basis, which would not take into account the special needs of certain areas. Distribution should be based on deprivation and poverty indicators such as housing, unemployment and other social issues. Those indicators reflect the standard of food premises in an area. I ask the Government to take that matter fully into account. I refer in particular to ethnic minorities and food handlers whose first language is not English. More money must be spent on training and on leaflets in other languages. I hope that the Minister will bear that point in mind.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, with amendments.

Agricultural Council

10.53 pm

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. John Gummer): The House will be aware of the illegal ban on British beef exports imposed by France, Germany and Italy, and of the very vigorous response by the Government and the Commission to this unilateral action.

I attended a special meeting of the Council, called at the request of the Commission, to address this intolerable situation which had grave consequences for the Community institutions and their reputation.

The Council met on 6 June to consider advice from the Commission's independent scientific veterinary committee. Mr. MacSharry—the Agriculture Commissioner—stated clearly that this advice, reached unanimously, repeated the committee's earlier judgment that existing Community rules on bovine spongiform encephalopathy fully protected public and animal health. There is therefore no reason to prevent the free circulation of British beef on the basis of the measures already taken by the United Kingdom and the Community.

It was clear from the meeting that some member states were not prepared to stand by the best scientific advice —even when proffered by experts from across the Community. We therefore were faced with a range of trade-distorting and protectionist demands which we discussed throughout Wednesday night and this morning. I am pleased to tell the House that we achieved a successful settlement much to Britain's advantage.

The main features of the settlement are, first, the commitment by all member states to lift at once their import restrictions; secondly, British beef is to be accepted in all markets of the Community and that agreement is to cover calves, carcases, and boneless meat; thirdly, the Commission will take up immediately with third countries the need immediately to remove any trade restrictions that are still in place; and, fourthly, the Commission will take up the case for extending our ban on feeding ruminant protein to ruminants. The Netherlands has already followed suit. Denmark implements tomorrow and the French have said that they are likely to take a similar step. That is a major change which will defend and protect people's health throughout the Community.

Fifthly, there will be a research programme, which is designed to explore the likelihood of BSE occurring in Community countries other than the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland.

The Commission has undertaken to extend the coverage of beef intervention in this country. In large measure the export arrangements for British beef remain in place. We shall reinforce our control systems—particularly in the marking of calves. Importers of carcases from the United Kingdom have pointed to the fact that our cutting arrangements are not always duplicated in their plants. They are not therefore able to give the consumer the assurances that we give at home regarding the removal of all specified material. To provide some measure of similar assurance for consumers in other member states, we have agreed not to send bone-in carcases from holdings which have recently had BSE cases.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Why does not that apply to Britain?

Mr. Gummer: There is no limitation of the export of bone-out British beef—*[Interruption.]*—precisely because Britain is covered by tougher regulations and the British housewife is better protected. The hon. Gentleman's constituents in Bolsover are better protected than people in any other Community country. He should know that and not undermine British beef.

All Community countries now express themselves fully satisfied on the export of British beef. The scientific veterinary commitee has reiterated its clear statement on the safety of British beef. The Commission has wholly vindicated the British position and we have averted an extremely damaging trade dispute—in a matter of a single week. Unilateral action should not have been taken. Tonight that action has been rescinded.

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): I thank the Minister most sincerely for coming to the House at such a late hour after spending so many hours locked in deadlock in negotiations.

We very much welcome the lifting of the ban on the trade in British cattle, but having listened to the Minister with great care, I thought that he delivered a deliberately carefully constructed statement that concealed more than it revealed—*[Interruption.]* When hon. Members have had time to study and assimilate it, they may come to the same conclusion. Therefore, may I ask the Minister several specific questions arising from it and perhaps relating to it? If it was such a successful outcome, why did he spend 26 hours fighting most of the proposals and why did he flatly reject the certification proposals when they were put forward by the Germans six months ago? Why did he say then that they were inoperative and, indeed, unnecessary? We demand, and have a right to, an answer to that point.

Secondly, will he confirm that there remains a total ban on all British cattle over the age of six months to every one of the European member states? Will he also confirm that there is a ban on all calves born of BSE cows to every one of the EEC states? We need to know the answer to that one. Will he also confirm to the House that the result of the triumphal statement that he made is that in effect we have extended the German ban on bone-in beef to every other Community country? I believe that that is the case. Has he assessed the capacity of meat cutting and packaging firms in Britain? Can they cope with all the deboning that will be necessary as a result of the agreement?

Will the Minister clarify another point that worries many people? Both the British and the French housewife will buy beef from British cows, but is there not a distinct difference between what they will buy? Are there not now two markets for British beef in Europe? Will the Minister confirm that following his cave-in today—[HON. MEMBERS: "Shame."]—beef will be allowed to be sold to the British consumer which cannot be sold to the French consumer? *[Interruption.]* This is a very serious point and people have the right to know about it. *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members may not be interested in what is on offer to their electorates but I certainly am and most Opposition Members are. I repeat the question. Is it true that beef will be sold to the British consumer which it would be illegal to sell to the French consumer? In short, is not the British consumer being treated as a second-rate citizen in that respect?

Finally, we welcome the fact that we have had the ban lifted. Will the Minister accept that he has merely bought breathing space? Will he take a major initiative to reassure the British consumer?

Mr. Donald Thompson (Calder Valley): Cheat, cheat, cheat—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Dr. David Clark.

Dr. Clark: It is interesting that when I ask purely factual questions—*[Interruption.]* When hon. Gentlemen read *Hansard* tomorrow they will find that I have not proffered any opinions but merely asked questions. If the hon. Member for Calder Valley (Mr. Thompson) wants to shout from a sedentary position "Cheat", that is up to him. I know that he is in the butchering industry and that he has a vested interest in that respect. Conservative Members may not be interested in the long-term interests of the beef industry and the consumer, but we are—*[Interruption.]* It is important that we save our beef and farming industries.

Will the Minister take some initiatives to get reassurances not only at home but abroad? Will he urge the EC to establish a committee of medical experts to complement that of the veterinarians to examine the human aspects related to beef? *[Laughter.]* I wonder why Conservative Members laugh. Are they afraid of the scientific evidence? [HON. MEMBERS: "You are."]

Will the Minister now introduce the random sampling of routinely slaughtered cows to judge the extent of the disease? As part and parcel of that and his certification policy, will he introduce the tagging of cows and herd movement books to assist the tracing of individual animals? If the Minister feels that it is necessary to introduce legislation along the lines of that operating in Northern Ireland—introduced correctly by the Government——

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): Does the hon. Gentleman have a doctorate in defamation? Why does he not stick to subjects of which he has some knowledge?

Dr. Clark: If the hon. Gentleman would care to get up I shall happily give way, but I wish that he would shut up or get out.

Mr. Gale: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Dr. Clark: I realise, Mr. Speaker, that I cannot give way.

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is not a debate. The hon. Gentleman must ask his questions to which he will get the answers.

Dr. Clark: It is always a sure sign that the Opposition are rattled—*[Laughter.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This takes up a lot of time.

Dr. Clark: With the opinion polls showing Labour 23 per cent. ahead, we all know who will be the Opposition. I should point out that one can have a lower case as well as an upper case "o" with the word opposition.

Sensible arrangements have been introduced in Northern Ireland for the tagging of animals and movement books. Such arrangements are a prerequisite to any system of certification. If the Government feel that it is necessary to introduce such legislation we shall facilitate its movement on to the statute book.

The Minister mentioned scientific knowledge. Is he prepared to make facilities available to all bona fide scientists, at home and overseas, so that they can try to tackle and overcome the serious and dangerous problem of BSE? The first thing that we must aim to do is to eradicate BSE from the British herd. Only then can we restore the full confidence in our beef and cattle industry that we all want.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman began by asking why we had taken 26 hours to achieve this decision. It is because we started with demands which were extremely unacceptable to Britain. The extent of the discussions—I put this in the mildest way I can—was much greater because I constantly had to counter the repeating to me by those with whom I was negotiating the wild statements supported by the hon. Gentleman.

Dr. Clark: Name one.

Mr. Gummer: I do not need to repeat them, because the hon. Gentleman repeated a whole range of them during his questions. I will not lower the debate to the kind of party-political debate I have seen on television tonight. Let me make a direct comment to the hon. Gentleman. When we have a solution that is backed by all 12 nations, for the hon. Gentleman to talk about temporary arrangements and about our returning again—in the way he talked on television tonight—can do nothing but undermine the agreement that has been reached by those nations in Brussels after 26 hours of negotiation.

The arrangements are those of the whole of the Community. It is not a special deal with Germany, which is what the Germans were seeking, and that is why it is entirely different. It means that we are selling into Germany beef that we were not able to sell in before. It is wholly wrong to say that this agreement applies only to bone-out beef. That is precisely what was being tried on us, with people pushing for that. In fact, this allows for bone-in beef carcases to spread throughout the Community, including into Germany, where they had been stopped by unilateral action for some months.

The British housewife is protected, and her confidence is supported, much better than is the case in any other country in the European Community, because our cutting arrangements for beef with bones, as well as bone-out beef, make sure that all the specified material is removed. With exported carcases, that cannot be assured in the importing country, so we are giving a secondary assurance that is not as extensive as that which we provide now for the British consumer. Opposition Members who suggest otherwise cannot have the interests of the consumer or of the farming community at heart. I put the consumer first. I wish that Opposition Members would do the same.

If the hon. Gentleman wishes me to talk about European Community committees, I gladly do so. I have upheld the European specialist committees and fought for them to be upheld, and I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman should still be proposing that I do things that scientific committees in this country and abroad have said we should not do, or have recommended that we should no longer do, because we should use the resources elsewhere. I have told the hon. Gentleman those facts time and again. He still repeats, on television and elsewhere, the statement that he made, and he must be careful lest someone accuses him—though I would never do so—of misleading the British people. I must tell Labour Members that it is

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becoming increasingly clear that the interests at their heart are not the interests that we would seek to propose but the interests of party politics.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. May I ask hon. Members to put single questions to the Minister, please?

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): To an even greater extent—because of the extraordinary and deplorable comments of the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark)—I ask my right hon. Friend to accept the congratulations and gratitude of beef farmers in Hampshire and throughout the United Kingdom. I also ask him to pursue further the proposition that his sterling efforts to promote, protect and further the interests of British agriculture have been utterly undermined by the negative and destructive attitude of Labour Members, in this House and in the European Parliament.

Mr. Gummer: It is a pity if we cannot be pleased when we have achieved something that is to the benefit of the British consumer and British farmer. Once upon a time hon. Members on both sides of the House were keen to do that. In any event, let us accept that we have done what we set out to do. The bans are now raised. The Community has solved this problem within a week, whereas in the past it has taken months. Had we gone to court, however quickly it had been done—and the Commission instituted very fast measures—it would have taken much longer. We have come back with the best deal that could be achieved and a deal which is highly satisfactory for the nation.

Mr. Geraint Howells (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): On this occasion I hold the view that hon. Members on both sides of the House, never mind the party to which they belong, should back the Minister and the Commission to the hilt. I congratulate the Minister on his stand against the Germans and the French. Perhaps many Opposition Members are not aware that the beef industry in Wales is worth £253 million, and that it is also important to England, Scotland and Ireland. Over eight or 10 weeks irresponsible statements have been made by politicians in this country, by a few scientists and by some sections of the media. I hope that after this episode the people who have been responsible for such scaremongering will pull themselves together to safeguard the interests of agriculture and consumers.

I have two questions for the Minister. First, was compensation discussed? Secondly, can he assure our beef producers that exports of beef will be back to normal within the next few weeks?

Mr. Gummer: Certainly, the other countries have accepted that the ban must be raised immediately. I am perfectly prepared to be reasonable about the time at which the messages go out, although I see from the veterinary arrangements of the Federal Republic of Germany that notices to the Länder went out even before the final agreement was reached. That shows that the Federal Republic fulfilled its commitment honourably.

The hon. Gentleman asked about compensation. We were not prepared to discuss that because we were discussing the principle of trade within the Community. There was some attempt by some people to suggest that we could be bought off, out of the business of trading. That was entirely to try to protect their own farmers. I am not prepared to go in for such discussions and would not countenance them. As I said in my statement, the Commission has agreed to extend the coverage of intervention so that it covers an area which other countries appeared to have and which we have not had up to now in the context of what I understand are referred to as 03 steers. This is not a vast matter, but it is an important matter of fairness and equality which I am pleased we were able to sort out.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): May I add my warmest congratulations to my right hon. Friend the Minister on his outstanding success in the interests of the consumer and the farmer? Was he able in his long night to cover the issue of the export of live breeding cattle to the continent? The performance of the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), has been a disgrace to the nation and has greatly let down the farmer and the consumer.

Mr. Gummer: I believed that we ought to start the negotiations by accepting the scientific veterinary committee's advice, which was almost exactly the advice that it had given to us before on two separate occasions. Therefore, this was not the time to discuss with the Commission whether its past decisions ought to be changed. We were in the business of accepting the Commission's statement that it had already clearly protected the public and that we did not need to move from there. That was a proper basis.

I have made certain alterations, all of which are consistent with scientific advice. I was not prepared to be pushed down the route which I am often asked to go down by the Opposition and by those on the continent who took up the same arguments about going down routes that are not scientifically defensible. Once one does that, one cannot stand anywhere. As soon as one accepts a non-scientific answer, there is no reason not to accept another such answer. To do that would mean that we could not stand where we have been standing. I am proud that the Government are able to say that we have taken the necessary measures before the scare arose and are still taking them and have not added to them because there is no scientific judgment that would lead us to do so. However, if the scientists asked us to take additional measures because there was a change in the information that they received, I would of course take them. That is a sensible basis on which to operate, rather than rushing after any old hare that happens to arise.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): The beef industry is most important in the Northern Ireland economy, and worth some £300 million to us. There is rightly resentment in Northern Ireland at the ridiculous, outrageous and hyped-up media coverage of this issue. There is disappointment about the statements from the official Opposition. I regret to have to say that, but it is a fact. On behalf of the Ulster Unionists, I pay tribute to the Minister for having robustly defended the industry. We appreciate what has been achieved in difficult circumstances.

As we in Northern Ireland can identify each animal in each herd, do we not have an opportunity to export both bone-in and bone-out meat? Should there be some

difficulty in getting the market to stabilise, will the Ministry continue to provide intervention support until the market does stabilise?

Mr. Gummer: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his kind remarks. The intervention support will continue while the market continues as it is. As the hon. Gentleman knows, intervention is automatically triggered through the management committee on the basis of the market situation in any three regions of the Community—in this case, Great Britain, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Both that and the promotion support going through the various organisations will continue.

There are great opportunities for British beef, from whatever part of the United Kingdom it comes, because we produce some of the best beef in the world. One of the reasons why it felt so satisfied about the agreement is that it allows carcase meat to continue to be sold throughout the Community. That is important to Northern Ireland. I pay tribute to the robust way in which the north of Ireland organisations, the Secretary of State and the farmers' organisations have supported me in this. They could have sought an independent arrangement, but were determined that this should be a United Kingdom answer, and that is what we have.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): The farming community and the meat industry in Northern Ireland have heaved a sigh of relief because the Minister has succeeded in getting this illegal ban, which was put on unilaterally and in defiance of the single market arrangement, lifted. The House knows my attitude to the Common Market. There are those who pay lip service to the single market, but when it comes to their national individual interests are prepared to flout it. Have not these people done serious harm to our industry and put a shadow over British beef? Under the rules of the Community, should not they be made to pay for what is a crime under the laws of the treaty?

Are not United Kingdom consumers better protected than those of any other country in the Community? For example, we are not subjected to meat that has been produced from cows that have been fed with concentrates. Yet these very nations that are crying out against Britain are still feeding offal concentrates to their animals. Therefore, our beef is better.

Would not it be monstrous if the Republic of Ireland, which has BSE, could freely export its meat to Europe? The Minister knows that cattle know no border in the island of Ireland, but Northern Ireland could be discriminated against.

Mr. Gummer: I thank the hon. Gentleman. I do not normally agree with him about much, but this time we can be as one.

I strongly support the concept of the European Community and the single market, and I am a believer in closer relationships between the countries of Europe. That is why I considered this unilateral action so wrong, and why I was able to argue so vehemently against it. It is very noticeable how people who talk easily of solidarity and Community arrangements shift from foot to foot when confronted by those who not only talk of those principles but uphold them.

I pay tribute to the supportive chairmanship of the Minister from the Irish Republic, who was extremely helpful in the negotiations—as, indeed, was Mr. MacSharry, the Commissioner. We tend to vent our wrath sometimes; let me say how much both helped us to achieve our end.

Although I might have put much of what was said by the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) less robustly, I agree that we need to stop the Community descending into old-fashioned retributive arguments when it fears that its markets have been imperilled by the products of certain nations. We have to put up with it: I have stood at this Dispatch Box and refused the Opposition's demands for illegal action on imported eggs in relation to salmonella, and I could argue the case on the strongest ground.

Dr. Dafydd Elis Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): I think that the whole House—and at least some parts of the Opposition—will appreciate that the Minister has sought a communautaire approach to the problem——

Mr. Skinner: Sold out.

Dr. Thomas: —and has not responded to the old-fashioned, unilateralist, nation-state nationalism exhibited by others. I am also grateful to him for expressing appreciation for the role played by the Irish Minister and Mr. MacSharry.

I ask the Minister to respond to the feelings of many of us that the official Opposition have used the issue as a handle to attack the Government. They have not based their attack on the needs of consumers, or the needs of United Kingdom agriculture; they have simply used the matter as another stick with which to beat their opponents. That has prevented them from addressing the real issues.

Will the Minister, for instance, tell us a little more about the Commission's decision to take up the case of the ban on feeding ruminant protein to ruminants? What will that mean Community-wide? He also mentioned

"a research programme . . . to explore the likelihood of BSE occurring in Community countries other than the UK and the Republic of Ireland."

That is clearly part of the ongoing Community-wide solution to the problem, which will prevent us from becoming involved in sterile arguments about bans imposed on nation-state borders that are part of the old Europe rather than the new Europe that all of us are anxious to build.

Mr. Gummer: I thank the hon. Gentleman. I think that this must be a communautaire answer: after all, we are talking about selling our products throughout the European Community, and we must therefore have a common regime governing how they are sold. We must also base that regime on the clear scientific evidence that British beef is perfectly safe. It needs to be sold, because much of it is some of the best in Europe. I said on French television today—in rather strong terms—that I hoped that French people would now be able to eat the best beef in the world, some of which will come from Wales.

The support of the Welsh industry has been very helpful, and I have been able to attend the negotiations with clear support from the nation as a whole. Although I do not want to pursue all the points made by the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas), the House must realise that most countries come to Community debates representing the entirety of their Governments and Oppositions: they are not faced with

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quotations from others by those with whom they are negotiating. We must give serious consideration to that aspect of the matter.

Of course we shall look carefully at the Commission's proposals relating to the ruminant ban. We know that the Dutch have supported us all along, having imposed a ruminant ban much earlier. The Danes are doing so tomorrow; the French asked to be allowed to do so in advance of any decision by the Community in their case, and can do so as long as they do it in a particular form. It appears to me that they will take that view.

My view is that of all the issues that appear to be certain, one is the very real belief that the reason for this disease is the contamination of feed. It is much more sensible that ruminant feeds should not be fed to ruminants. Many of us believe that there is a natural business of that sort—but leaving that aside there is some pretty clear evidence that we should follow, and we shall press the Community on that.

The Community will carry out the research because many worry lest there may be cases that are not so clearly notifiable as they are in this country. We protect our public very much better than any other country does because we face the issues. We have the largest incidence and we have put into place all the measures that the scientists have recommended. That is why we can, with real confidence, support what the chief medical officer says about the safety of British beef.

Mr. Robert Boscawen (Somerton and Frome): The British livestock industry has faced a severe crisis during the past 10 days, and therefore the consumer has also faced a severe crisis—despite the sour grapes of the Opposition. One would think that they did not know what had happened. My right hon. Friend deserves the gratitude of this country—and not only in the short term—for his salutary manner, which means that this will not easily be repeated.

Can my right hon. Friend confirm that herds that suffer this tragic disease will not in any way be penalised, as was suggested in earlier reports from Brussels?

Mr. Gummer: I thank my hon. Friend and can confirm that there were proposals of the sort to which he referred. We cannot provide the same protection as we provide for our home produce because we do not do the deboning and cutting up of the carcases when they go in carcase form. Therefore, we have agreed to measures which do not provide the same level of protection—they cannot—but which will help in the ability to sell abroad. The measure will help producers in a number of parts of the country. Everyone recognises that Britain protects everybody by taking every animal with BSE out of the food chain and destroying it, and taking the insides and any specified material out of every animal, even though it is healthy. That is something that we can do for the British consumer that cannot be done by countries that do not have the same cutting practices.

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): Is it not clear that the European Council of Ministers has failed to endorse the Minister's claim that all British beef is safe? It said —the Minister agreed with it—that 95 per cent. of British beef is fit enough to be exported. Has not the right hon. Gentleman replaced a total ban on exports with a creeping ban? The rate of spread of BSE is doubling every six months. It now affects 5 per cent. of our herds. Within a year it will affect 20 per cent. and within two years all our herds will be affected. Has not the Minister agreed today to a creeping ban? Why does he not take decisive action to eradicate BSE? European countries have their doubts about vertical transmission, which is why the Minister reluctantly agreed that calves of cows with BSE would not be exported. Why does he not introduce a slaughter policy for the calves of BSE-affected cows with 100 per cent. compensation for farmers?

Mr. Gummer: There have been a number of interventions from Members from the Principality, but that was the least helpful one to the consumer or to the farmer. I hope that the hon. Gentleman's constituents hear exactly what he said. I shall not do what the hon. Gentleman proposes because the expert scientific committee, the Tyrrell committee—I understand that the hon. Gentleman is a doctor of chemistry—has said that that would not be helpful.

Mr. Williams: Show me the report.

Mr. Gummer: I have published the report and it is in the Library, as the hon. Gentleman knows.

Mr. Williams: One page.

Mr. Gummer: It may be only one page but there is a great deal more truth on that one page than we have heard from the hon. Gentleman today.

The hon. Gentleman must accept that what he has said is not based on fact at all. He must also come to terms with his conscience and decide whether he is prepared to bear the burden of the sort of things that he is saying when they are wholly contrary to the expert advice that has been given. That must question whether what he says is helpful to consumers or to farmers.

Mr. Donald Thompson (Calder Valley): Will my right hon. Friend accept the congratulations of Conservative Members and all thinking Opposition Members? Does my right hon. Friend realise that there are only 10 Back-Bench Labour Members behind the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) and only four of his trouper friends next to him? Despite every detail of every incident being theirs for the asking during the past four years—if the Opposition did not know to ask, they did not know what was happening—they have made up their mind to destroy the small British high street butcher and the small British farmer, all because they think that they will cull a few votes from the consumers who woo them every day for lunch in London. Again, I add my congratulations to those from the packed Conservative Benches and the packed ranks of the miserable 12 Members on the Labour Benches.

Mr. Gummer: I thank my hon. Friend for his comments. The real issue is that we should not put the interests of farmers, butchers or anyone else ahead of the consumer. Nor must we ever damage the interests of the consumer because we wish to push a particular personal or party point. The real argument here is that the interests of the consumer demand that we publish and act upon the best scientific advice. I clearly committed myself to publish and give the information and I have done so in every particular. I do it day in and day out, but I am always accused by the Opposition of not doing so. I would

certainly not resile from that commitment because if everybody knows the facts, they need have no fear, and that is how to support the consumer.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I do not care tuppence for the French and the Germans and the Common Market, and I have listened to farmers on "News at Ten", some of whom are not very happy about the deal. Can the Minister explain why the French, Germans and others in the Common Market will have beef that has a seal of approval, while the British consumer will get the scrag end?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman is entirely wrong. He knows that he is wrong. He heard my comments, and he only makes the remarks he does because he thinks that he might get the odd bit of support in the country. Every consumer in Britain is better protected than any consumer in the whole of the rest of the Community. We have in place a much more comprehensive protection system than it does. The hon. Gentleman may refer to himself when he speaks of scrag end, but he does not refer to the high-quality beef provided for British consumers and cut for British consumers in Britain.

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): I thank my right hon. Friend the Minister, particularly on behalf of the Cheale family in my constituency, which is one of the largest exporters of British beef in this country—and whose business has been grievously damaged by the action of our so-called partners on the continent.

The Cheale family informs me that it is inconceivable that the problem does not exist among continental herds. That is confirmed by my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill), who is himself a beef farmer. I was interested by the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Minister about investigating the problem on the continent. Is he aware of the link between BSE and rabies? Apparently, the physical symptoms manifested by an animal with BSE are very similar to those of rabies. In countries where rabies is endemic, animals are often put down because they are suspected of having rabies when they are probably victims of BSE. I hope that my right hon. Friend will bear that in mind when he begins his investigations, so that there is no cover-up of continental cases.

Mr. Gummer: It is certainly true that the United States of America is reconsidering a number of cases of bovine rabies to establish whether they were misdiagnosed and might have been cases of BSE. We must wait to see the results of that work.

I am not one of those who want to understate the seriousness of the problem in Britain by saying, "BSE is found elsewhere as well." I am concerned about the protection of the public. If one wants to protect animal and human health, one must take the best measures possible. One of the measures that we have taken, as have the Dutch and the Danes—it is one which we hope the French will take—is to get rid of ruminant feed for ruminants. I am sure that that is a good step. I hope that the rest of the Community will take the steps now applicable to them in their particular circumstances—because this is a Community decision—if incidents of BSE are found in other countries.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Will the Minister confirm that there have been more than 11,000 confirmed cases of BSE in England and Wales alone, and that the number is rising? Is not it the case that bone-in beef from non-infected herds only will be exported to Europe? Does not that mean that a higher proportion of beef from infected herds will remain in this country? Will the Minister answer the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) that one standard of beef will not be exported but will be made available to the British consumer?

Mr. Gummer: It is clear that the hon. Gentleman does not understand anything at all about BSE. It does not involve infected herds. It is not like foot and mouth disease. BSE is caught by eating contaminated feed. We have always proceeded on the basis of the worst possible case, which is that there might be some kind of maternal transmission. Although we have been unable to prove that, I have always thought it best to take that possibility into account. However, it is not a sensible proposition that BSE affects herds in the way that the hon. Gentleman suggests. The hon. Gentleman should not say such things. If he does, those people who think that he knows about such matters might take his words seriously.

I confirm absolutely to the hon. Gentleman that the meat provided for the consumer in Britain is better protected than the meat provided for the consumer anywhere else in Europe. Therefore, if there are two standards, ours is the higher.

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): Will my right hon. Friend accept that all farmers, especially livestock producers in Dorset, have nothing but contempt for the damaging politicking that we have had from the Opposition Benches over the past few weeks? He has agreed today to certain quality controls, and to certification for British cattle. Does he hope and expect that our partners within the European Community will move towards acceptance, on a Community basis, of the same controls, because that will be of crucial importance in the future?

Mr. Gummer: I am sure that that is the right direction to move it, but it is obviously more important to deal with the problem where there is a large incidence of it, rather than where there is a very small incidence, which is perhaps localised. That is a situation which is found, for example, in the Republic of Ireland. It might be different if one had two or three cases, which perhaps could be traced back to particular circumstances. I am not one of those who say that because we find one case we have to have a whole paraphernalia of controls in a particular country. What is important about this decision is that if another country found itself in similar circumstances, the measures would apply to it, because this is a Community proposal. It merely says that it is at the moment epidemiologically applicable only in the United Kingdom. Therefore, I am clear that what my hon. Friend says is true.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): The House will be aware of my interest in these matters, and I am sure that the whole of the food and farming industry is grateful to my right hon. Friend not only for this achievement—getting the immediate ban lifted—but for the very robust view that he has taken in defence of our great industry during the crisis. Will my right hon. Friend take this

[Mr. Christopher Gill]

opportunity to explain to the House that the vast majority of meat eaten in Britain today is prime beef, and is not to be confused with cow meat?

Mr. Gummer: I am sure that that is true, and of course the better cuts of meat are those that we eat with greatest enjoyment. All beef sold in this country is safe to eat, and all beef sold in this country is better protected than anywhere else in the world.

Mr. Tim Boswell (Daventry): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the best response from the British farmer to these circumstances would be to sublimate their understandable anger at continental protectionism into a commercial challenge to the continental producers on their own ground, based on the superior competitiveness, the greater quality and the undoubted safety of British beef?

Mr. Gummer: I am sure that that is true, especially as we have been able to make a big change in the green pound, which will make it much easier for that to happen. I remind my hon. Friend that the reason that we have been able to get that market for our beef is the Community institutions, and it is a triumph not only for the work done by the Commissioner and the President but for the Community itself. It was very nearly a disaster for the Community, but has turned out to show that its institutions can work.

Mr. Charles Wardle (Bexhill and Battle): Will my right hon. Friend accept that beef producers in Sussex have reason to be very grateful for his tenacity and determination in defence of their industry? Does he think it reprehensible of the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), to have encouraged needless anxiety about BSE for imagined political gain, when the Government have taken the best available professional advice, followed it to the letter, and informed the public scrupulously throughout the whole episode?

Mr. Gummer: I believe that my hon. Friend is right to say that the encouragement of fear when there is no need to be frightened is something that we should all avoid. In so far as it has not been avoided, it has not helped the consumer or the industry.

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): Will my right hon. Friend confirm to the farmers of Yorkshire, who will be delighted by this evening's news, that the media have been misled by the mischievous comments of misguided scientists, particularly in West Yorkshire? As he has referred specifically to the EC, is he arguing tomorrow with the EFTA countries so that the ban will be removed there in the interests of great British beef?

Mr. Gummer: I just think that we ought to make a distinction between scientists and pundits. The scientists who are represented on all the committees in the European Community and in Britain have wholly supported the Government's position because the Government have followed their advice in all particulars. Therefore, we must hold the scientific view and not the view of those who seek to put forward their idiosyncratic views by way of the media rather than giving their information to the scientists, their peer group, who can judge it.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): Will my right hon. Friend accept the thanks of the major beef exporters in my constituency to whom I have spoken this evening, as considerable damage was being inflicted on their business and had the ban not been lifted there would have been many bankruptcies among farmers and livestock exporters? In his discussions with the French Minister, was he able to get a guarantee that there will be no other action by French farmers such as blockading ports to prevent our beef from reaching French shops? Did he discuss with him sending our our own veterinary experts to look into the problem of la vache tremblante?

Mr. Gummer: No doubt the problem of la vache tremblante, if it exists, will be examined by the Community under the arrangements that I announced earlier. My discussions with the French Minister were sometimes rather sharp and clear. I made clear what I thought about the entire procedure of acting unilaterally and not going to the Community to get this result without the action that took place. When one has reached a conclusion which has been supported across the board, it is better to forget about that and proceed from there. Therefore, I have made it quite clear that we expect vigorous action to lift any blockade attempted on the port of Cherbourg.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The statement has now been running for nearly an hour, but I will call those hon. Members who wish to speak. I ask them not to repeat what has been said before. With respect to the Minister, he has received sufficient congratulations, so I ask that we have questions now.

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): May I thank my right hon. Friend for standing up for British consumers and farmers in the face of the French allegations against British beef? Does he agree that it had more to do with placating the French farmers than with British beef? Will he confirm that those French senior vets that came here last week to discuss BSE were junior officials who knew nothing whatsoever about the disease?

Mr. Gummer: I think that we can now draw a veil over the situation which we have now suitably ended. The French equivalent of the National Farmers Union made it clear that it considered the ban to be the result of its own pressures which were entirely to protect the French market for itself. That is what we said and the ban has now been lifted. I hope that this will never occur again.

Mr. Robert Hicks (Cornwall, South-East): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is incumbent on us all to play a part in restoring confidence in beef production and consumption? Furthermore, will he confirm that today's meeting in Brussels revealed that there is no evidence whatsoever that this dreadful disease is transmitted horizontally within herds and, therefore, no decisions should be made that will act to the detriment of those herds which unfortunately have had an affected animal?

Mr. Gummer: I can confirm that the scientific committee made it absolutely clear that the evidence showed that no such decisions ought to be made, so there is no question of that. But it would be quite wrong to attempt to raise people's confidence in British beef unless we were utterly sure that that confidence was properly placed. We are utterly sure. We have the chief medical

officer's clear statement. We have the clear statements of the Tyrrell committee and the Southwood committee and we have a Government who have carried out all that they have asked us to do to protect public health. That is why we can try to restore the confidence and why we can, with some realism, ask those who have taken a different path in the past now to accept their responsibilities.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the farmers in Kent will not merely thank him for what he has done, but will applaud his stand on behalf of the farming community, as will the consumers applaud his assurances? Does he agree that the negotiations have revealed two points? First, they have stripped away the veneer on the Opposition Front Bench and revealed the opportunism and treachery that lie there. Secondly, they have revealed that this country is the good European and that, in this case, the French, the Germans and the Italians have sought to break the law. Is it not time that the Commission sought to enforce the existing directives before applying others to the Community?

Mr. Gummer: The last point is not necessarily the result of the negotiations. The negotiations have shown that when countries have tried to act unilaterally, the institutions have eventually enabled them to come together to find an answer. That is what we have done. The answer is satisfactory to us and the others have agreed to support it. The Community emerges stronger in the end than it was before. I see no reason why those things that are better done together should not be done together. There are many things that we do not yet do together which we could do together.

If we decide to do something in common, we must accept that that means that we do it even when it is embarrassing and unhappy because our farmers do not like it. That is why it was wrong for the others to take action. They were saying "We keep to the Community rules in fair weather, but if there is a bit of rockiness and there are a few sheep in the streets of Paris, we take different measures." They have resiled from that position and I am pleased about that. We must now move on without referring to the matter further.

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): In his busy day, has my right hon. Friend had an opportunity to see this week's edition of *Farming News*, which came out today? It is a weekly that has sometimes been fierce in its criticism of the Government, but today it carries a survey showing that 60 per cent. of farmers questioned expressed full confidence in my right hon. Friend's policy. Does not that speak volumes for the way in which he has defended the agriculture and consumer interests in the crisis? Is it not in sharp contrast with the failure of the Opposition to defend either agriculture or the consumer? Is that why they have been so poorly supported tonight? They made miserable efforts, once again, to undermine my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Gummer: I had seen the article and it was rather cheering because the latest poll suggested that the figure was 6 per cent. It is at least a considerable improvement and we can, perhaps, manage the other 40 per cent. some time. It is important for farmers to recognise that they cannot be supported against the consumer. The only way in which the farming community can be properly supported is if we put the consumer first and foremost because the consumer is the market that the farmer has to get. That is why I believe that the Ministry is a consumer Ministry and why we must put the consumer first.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): Does my right hon. Friend agree that he deserves the appreciation of the whole House for the way in which he has held up the interests of British farming in the attacks against it by many foreign farming communities, whose standards are considerably lower than ours? Nevertheless, does he agree that there has been damage to the beef exporting industry and that that damage has been caused primarily by the fact that the French took action that was illegal, opportunistic and cynical, and that had nothing to do with the health regime, as they pretended? It was purely to try to protect their own farmers. If the Single European Act means anything, is there not a strong case for at least some compensation from the French Government to British farmers who have suffered as a result?

Mr. Gummer: The most important thing is to get the trade back and sell the beef. That is our objective, and that is why we sought to do it as quickly as we have done. The best thing for British farmers now is to make up in the coming weeks the market which they have lost in the past. They will benefit very much from the united support of the House to rebuild the confidence that there should be in beef. The real message is "Let us get together to ensure that the consumer recognises the truth and the facts and, therefore, buys the beef."

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that I rarely intervene on his statements because I represent consumers rather than producers? Nevertheless, I thank him for his action today, which has protected the favourite meat of the majority of my constituents. Does my right hon. Friend agree that not only the farmer but the taxpayer has suffered as a result of the illegal and regrettably typical action of the French, German and Italian Governments in this matter? Will he continue to pursue through the Community the possibility of compensation to the British taxpayer for the extra costs that will fall on the British taxpayer through the Community contribution to support the beef market that was illegally damaged by the action of those Governments?

Mr. Gummer: It would be difficult to apportion the cost that my hon. Friend is talking about. There must be many others, too, who probably feel today that they have contributed towards that reduction in the market. Now that we have the clear scientific evidence in Britain, in the European Community and from the chief medical officer, we should base our actions and statements on it and not seek to give credence to the personal views of one or two individuals.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): The House will wish to congratulate my right hon. Friend on remaining in such sparkling form after battling with the Community for two whole days and answering questions for more than an hour tonight. What would have been the outcome had the delegation been led by the official spokesman for the Opposition, the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark)?

Mr. Gummer: I must say that I am not given to contemplate either the impossible or the intolerable.

Mr. William Hague (Richmond, Yorks): May I, in winding up, ask my right hon. Friend to assure farmers that he and his Ministry will keep a close eye on the French and Germans to ensure that they do not seek to prevent British beef from entering their shops by means that are more underhand or less publicised than those attemped so far?

Mr. Gummer: I am in the business of making sure that the agreement that we have works. I repeat that this is one of those things that shows that Community institutions can and do work. As we have large markets in the rest of Europe for our agricultural products, I prefer to encourage the whole industry to go out and sell British beef, dairy products and farm products generally. Many parts of the industry are not yet doing as well as they could, and I want them to go out and show the rest of Europe that 1992 is the year in which we expect to make our farm products the best and most widely used in Europe.

Rates (North Yorkshire)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

12.3 am

Mr. Michael Alison (Selby): My starting point in this brief debate is to ask my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope), to recognise that, prima facie, there is something odd about the revaluation in North Yorkshire. The top 20 rating authorities, in terms of boosts shown in rateable values for the whole of England and Wales, contain no fewer than five such authorities—one quarter of the total—from just one county, North Yorkshire. Of the other 15 high fliers, 14 are in the south or west of England. It would be easier to be reconciled to these five northern high fliers if they were a north of England phenomenon as a whole. But they are not. They are a unique North Yorkshire phenomenon.

Go a bit further north—Darlington, Middlesbrough, Gateshead—and one immediately finds that the revaluation increases are half those in North Yorkshire. Go a bit further south—Leicester and Derby, for example,—and one finds the same: revaluations among the lowest in England and Wales, and half those in North Yorkshire. It really will not do to say that the Selby revaluation, for example, started from a very low base. Lower than Gateshead and Middlesbrough, or Leicester? I doubt it.

The kind of North Yorkshire revaluation boosts I am complaining about can be vividly illustrated. The most striking example comes from a small engineering business —literally a cottage industry—in the village of Bishopsthorpe, near York. One of this business's separately rated premises, a unit of 114 sq m—say the size of four lock-up garages—has undergone a revaluation from a figure of £43 in 1973 to £6,750 in the latest list. Have rents in Main street, Bishopsthorpe, for tiny business premises of this kind, really been driven up by some unimaginable, maniacal competition of frantic entrepreneurs, by 157 times what they were in 1973? It seems inherently unlikely and implausible.

Another bad case comes from Selby town itself, where a butcher with a back-street premises, not a prime town site, has found his 1973 rateable value of £236 boosted to £5,500. To make matters worse, the same butcher has two shops in Selby, and the other one has undergone an increase from a higher original figure—£245—to a new lower figure of £2,500.

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for giving way for just a moment in this important debate. Does he accept that part of the problem is that the Labour party undertook to carry out a revaluation five years later and fudged it? I am sorry that no Labour Members are present. The problem stems from the original point that Labour should have carried out a revaluation five years later, but did not. The family businesses to which my right hon. Friend has referred in his constituency and those in my constituency of York, adjoining my right hon. Friend's constituency, could, like those in Ryedale, benefit enormously from the suggestion that I have already made to my hon. Friend the Minister, whereby family businesses could pay at a lower rate based on corporation tax, as already exists.

Mr. Alison: I fully accept my hon. Friend's point. The revaluation and the long delay are Labour responsibilities and are at the root of the problem. It is a good thing that all parties are now agreed that the revaluation should have taken place.

If North Yorkshire revaluations are so uniformly and uniquely high in the north of England, how come one can get such inexplicable variations for similar premises in such a tiny urban compass as the town of Selby as in the case of the two butcher's shops that I have just described? The chief executive of the Selby district council has supplied me with a list of 57 business premises in and around Selby where the multiplier is 25 times the 1973 rateable value.

I am bound to tell my hon. Friend the Minister that these atypical boosts in rateable value are a very serious matter in the Selby district and in north Yorkshire generally. One reason for which rents may have risen in the district and the county is that rates in earlier days were low —thanks to frugal Conservative authorities. Rents therefore tended to rise, because there was, as it were, some cost-slack in the overall economics of businesses, thanks to low rates. But now the valuation officer comes along and builds a new, far higher ratable value on those inflated rental figures—piling Pelion on Ossa, to use the classical phrase—as it were. The only way in which this vicious circle can be broken is for the trader to go out of business, and for rents to adjust downwards. But the newcomer to a tenancy, of course, gets no transitional relief. So we seem in North Yorkshire, uniquely in the north of England, literally to have fashioned an engine of economic depression by the revaluation, ironically so beneficial in Yorkshire and Humberside as a whole.

I should add that my hon. Friends the Members for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway), for Scarborough (Sir M. Shaw), for Harrogate (Mr. Banks) and for York (Mr. Gregory), who just intervened, as well as my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague) all corroborate what I am saying. Indeed, they have all helped me to prepare my case by giving examples from their constituencies. I make the case for them as well as for myself. I should also add that the chairman of the Selby and district chamber of trade, Mr. J. D. Lofthouse, has told me that, since the new business rates became known in the Selby district, 140 businesses in the district have either closed or transferred or are on the market.

There is one particularly vulnerable group in the Selby district, and more widely in North Yorkshire. I refer to small business premises, particularly those where the proprietor lives "over the shop", and has a rates liability apportioned between community charge and business rate. Many of these small businesses, as my hon. Friend knows, survive on low turnover and small profit margins by dint of long hours and unremitting service. They are a section of the commercial world which the Government have singled out by all sorts of initiatives and incentives in the small business field, to support and encourage. But the North Yorkshire revaluation is having precisely the opposite effect: it is depressing them. I single out in particular the small corner shop and the sub-post office.

The National Federation of Sub-Postmasters has been kind enough to furnish me, from its Yorkshire office, with some samples of complaints and representations that it has received from North Yorkshire members about the new valuation lists. From a bundle of about 30 such letters that I have seen and that I have here, no fewer than 11 refer to the possibility or likelihood of their packing the job in, and going out of business.

The Appleton Roebuck sub-post office, for example, finds that its ratable value has risen from £51 to £1,600, an increase of over 30 times. Have rents really risen 30 times in this small village since 1973? Another example—from Scarborough—shows a ratable value increase of similar proportions, from £157, for a small village post office, to £3,250. Many similar cases can be cited. And my hon. Friend will know that the special vulnerability of sub-post offices is that they cannot simply raise prices to defray costs. They labour under the fixed price regime of the Post Office tariff. No wonder many are contemplating closure.

Against that background, I urge my hon. Friend to consider four points and courses of action. First, he should double-check with the York valuation office that it has got things right. To err, after all, is human; to correct is a ministerial prerogative. I urge my hon. Friend officially to encourage small businesses in North Yorkshire to appeal, and to encourage the York valuation office to go out and meet the appellants halfway and more than halfway.

Secondly, I draw my hon. Friend's attention to section 49 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, which provides for local authorities to reduce, or remit entirely, the uniform business rate, where hardship is threatened. I hope that my hon. Friend can confirm that that provision is there precisely to temper the wind to such businesses as struggling sub-post offices and village corner shops and that he will today explicitly encourage local authorities to make generous use of those powers.

Thirdly, I hope that my hon. Friend can confirm that transitional relief, welcome and essential as it is for businesses in the Selby district and in North Yorkshire, is set for a long innings on the statute book, and not just for the next four years until the 1995 revaluation.

Will my hon. Friend consider whether some fundamental exemption provision under the uniform business rate might not be desirable and feasible for smaller businesses, akin to the exemption provided to smaller businesses in relation to VAT? There is no rationality in providing admirable small business incentives and exemptions, as with VAT, with the right hand if the left hand promptly takes them all away through rating.

This debate has not been a criticism of the uniform business rate itself, or of the recent revaluation associated with it. I have already observed that that has been endorsed by all parties in the House. The uniform business rate and the revaluation have been substantially beneficial to Yorkshire and Humberside. No, my complaint and that of my hon. Friends is about the quirks and anomalies of the revaluation uniquely to North Yorkshire. It is that to which I hope my hon. Friend will apply his mind.

12.16 am

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Does the hon. Gentleman have the agreement of the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) and the Minister?

Mr. Alison *indicated assent.*

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope) *indicated assent.*

Mr. Greenway: I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) on securing the debate. I am grateful to him for allowing me to endorse briefly some of the points that he has raised.

Ryedale is one of the five North Yorkshire districts to which my right hon. Friend referred. He mentioned the district valuer in York; I should like to pay tribute to him for the co-operation he has shown in meeting traders from my constituency. I know that that is also true of my colleagues in neighbouring constituencies.

One statistic concerns me and goes to the heart of the problem. The district valuer, on his own admission, expects that, of the 15,000 or so business premises in his valuation area, no fewer than 10,000 will appeal. Such is the scale of the problem.

Many of the examples that my right hon. Friend cited are equally prevalent in my constituency. An increase of three or four times above the present level of rates is all too commonplace, and many small shops have been badly affected.

The Minister should please, please think again about phasing the transitional arrangements beyond five years. An early announcement about that could help confidence in small businesses a great deal. Will the Minister also look carefully at the arrangements for small village shops, especially sub-post offices to which my right hon. Friend drew attention, where people live on the premises? Many such shops consist of one room in the house and we should re-examine the de minimis provisions to ensure that the shops that we are trying to support in every other way are not put out of business. The amount gained from such small businesses represents a small contribution to the overall business rate fund, but it is crucial to those businesses.

Can my hon. Friend also assure us that there will be a review of the valuation in North Yorkshire if the early appeals suggest that the tone of rent has been misjudged? Will he also recognise that many owner-occupiers face ratable values that are based on rental values that no small business could possibly hope to afford were they expected to pay them? Will he also consider allowing the transitional relief to be available to the new owner of a business? That should be done on the property basis and not just on the owner basis.

We are the party of small business and are proud to be so, but many of our most loyal supporters are beginning to doubt it. They need strong reassurances that they have not misjudged the situation.

12.20 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Christopher Chope): I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) and to my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) for giving me the opportunity to respond to what I know are long-standing and real concerns about the effects of the new business rating system, and particularly the revaluation, in North Yorkshire. I hope that I shall be able to allay some of those concerns.

As my right hon. Friend recognises, the key factor for businesses in North Yorkshire has been the revaluation of properties on the basis of rental values at 1 April 1988. Indeed, the increases for businesses in all districts except York are entirely attributable to that revaluation; locally set poundages in those districts in 1989-90 were between 3 per cent. and 9·5 per cent. above the national average. In York itself, where the locally set poundage in 1989-90 was just 1 per cent. below the national average, the revaluation accounts for all but the smallest part of any increase.

With the retention of non-domestic rates, ratable values had to be kept up to date. That was why the revaluation was carried out. It had, as my right hon. Friend recognises, widespread and all-party agreement. It was indefensible that businesses were still being taxed on 1973 property values as recently as March of this year, 17 years after the base date for that valuation. To continue to ignore changing circumstances would have been to expect businesses in the less prosperous regions to go on subsidising indefinitely those in more buoyant areas.

Given the lapse of time since the last revaluation, it is inevitable that there are some large increases in ratable values, as well as large reductions. I know that my right hon. Friend accepts that that is the natural consequence of the extent to which market rents rose between 1973 and 1988, but I understand his concern that the percentage increase in values in North Yorkshire has been greater than elsewhere. I believe, however, that there is a clear explanation for that.

While it is true that all the local authority areas in North Yorkshire have above average revaluation factors for most property types, especially for shops, it is equally true that they start from a very low base because, relative to other parts of the country, non-domestic ratable values in the area in the 1973 valuation list were low. I can best illustrate that with some examples.

In Selby, for example, although shops throughout the district have an average revaluation factor of 13·9 compared with the national average of 9·5, the average new ratable value is still only £6,777, which is 53 per cent. of the national average of £12,762. I understand that, in the town of Selby itself, the revaluation factor for shops is only just above the national average. The same point can be made about offices and warehouses in the district.

A similar picture emerges if one looks at the other districts in North Yorkshire, with the exception of York, which has both a high revaluation factor and high average ratable values, attributable to the considerable rise in open market rent levels in that city since 1973.

Taking North Yorkshire as a whole, despite an average revaluation factor for all properties of 12·1, compared with the national average of 8·1, the average new ratable value of £10,978 is only 60 per cent. of the national average of £18,081—lower than the shire county average of £15,011, lower than the Yorkshire and Humberside regional average of £11,826, and lower than the average for 27 of the 38 other shire county areas.

My right hon. Friend expressed doubts about whether the ratable value base in North Yorkshire in 1973 was lower than that of Gateshead and Middlesbrough or Leicester. Most definitely that was the case. The average ratable value for business premises in North Yorkshire in 1973 was just over £900, whereas the equivalent figures for Gateshead, Middlesbrough and Leicester were around £1,600, £1,850 and £1,975 respectively. What has happened since is that rental values, and hence ratable values, have risen more than average in North Yorkshire and by significantly less in the areas that my right hon. Friend mentioned.

My right hon. Friend has also highlighted a number of cases in his constituency where rates have risen significantly. There is not time to go into all the cases, so

I shall deal with the first one mentioned by my right hon. Friend—the small engineering business in Bishopsthorpe. My right hon. Friend said that they appeared to have experienced an increase in ratable value of 157 times. As I understand it, that is not the case, because the base from which the value has risen to £6,750 is more properly £388. The figure of £43 mentioned by my right hon. Friend is attributable to only a part of the premises prior to a merger which produced the property that was subsequently revalued. That illustrates the difficulty of taking individual cases and using them as a basis for saying that there has been a dramatic increase. Obviously, there has been a substantial increase, but it has been nothing like the increase of 157 times that my right hon. Friend's figures indicate.

The increase that has taken place means that the rate liability has gone up from about £1,050 in 1989-90 to £2,350. However, with transition, this year's bill will be only about £1,300—an increase of about £250 in the first year. While I do not deny that the property is facing a significant increase as a result of the revaluation, the picture is not quite as black as my right hon. Friend has painted. Threfore, I hope that he will agree that, in relative terms, businesses in North Yorkshire, with the understandable exception of York, do not face as great a burden as he had feared.

While I cannot, of course, say that no individual ratable value will be found to be excessive, I can assure my right hon. Friend that there is no reason to believe that values generally are incorrect. He also asks me to encourage small businesses to appeal against their ratable values and to encourage the district valuer at York to meet them halfway, or, indeed, more than halfway. In view of what I have just said, I know that he will not expect me to advocate a wholesale challenge to rating lists in North Yorkshire.

I understand, however, that the district valuer at York has already had meetings with the Greater York chamber of trade, the Selby small businesses association and the Selby chamber of trade—a meeting which my right hon. Friend attended. As we have heard in the debate, there has also been a meeting in the Palace of Westminster to discuss the revaluation with my right hon. Friend and some of our hon. Friends. I know that the district valuer is happy to continue to meet district associations. However, if ratepayers remain convinced that their new ratable value is unfair, they may propose to the district valuer before 1 October this year that it be altered. If the district valuer does not accept the proposal, it will be transferred to the local valuation and community charge tribunal as an appeal. They should do this rather than seek to pursue their case informally with the district valuer in order to protect their right to have the matter decided by a VCCT if agreement cannot be reached.

Although rates have gone up for most businesses in Selby and elsewhere in North Yorkshire, we have to take into account the transitional arrangements. The whole purpose of those arrangements was to ensure that the impact of the new bills did not have to be faced overnight. The arrangements phase in the higher increases and I know that the details of the phasing arrangements are familiar. The small business transition scheme will benefit between 77 and 87 per cent. of business premises in the county, with the exception of York, where 65 per cent. will benefit. That shows that a high percentage of businesses in York and North Yorkshire will benefit from the transitional arrangements which, at 15 per cent. in real terms, affect smaller businesses.

These arrangements will last for a least five years, and we have powers to extend them beyond 1995. I remind hon. Members that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment told the House on 25 April that the Government would be

"prepared to extend the transitional period if, after the next revaluation, small businesses face a steep increase on top of the 15 per cent. tranches of increase that will have occurred in the intervening period."—[*Official Report*, 25 April 1990; Vol. 171, c. 359.]

My right hon. Friend has argued that, between 1973 and 1990, rent levels reflected lower rates in North Yorkshire, but he is concerned that increased rates will not result in lower rents. He is right to make the connection but he should not worry that the link will suddenly be broken. Any property expert could confirm that there is an inverse relationship between rent and rates, because businesses usually take a view of the overall occupancy costs that they can afford; so if rates rise, this will exert downward pressure on rents. This does not necessarily mean that rents will fall, but they are certainly likely to increase less than would otherwise have been the case. This should help even businesses with leases containing upward-only rent reviews, because it would moderate the rent increases which they would otherwise face.

Lower rental levels in comparative terms should feed through to produce lower ratable values at the 1995 revaluation. The result may be that many of the bigger increases emerging from the revaluation will never, in practice, take effect. I know that that will be consolation to the businesses affected.

My right hon. Friend has asked me to encourage local authorities to make generous use of their powers to reduce or remit rates on grounds of hardship. I can certainly confirm that such powers could be used to protect businesses such as sub-post offices and village shops from closure, but local authorities alone can make decisions of this sort, and they are required by law, before doing so, to have regard to the interests of their community charge payers.

The purpose of the uniform business rate and the non-domestic revaluation is to remove distortions in the competitive position of business caused by widely varying rate poundages and the long delay since the last revaluation. The aim has been to redistribute the burden of business rates more fairly, not to increase it in real terms. To achieve this we have set the uniform business rate for 1990-91 at a level of 34·8p, which will ensure that we raise broadly the same amount of rates in real terms from private businesses and the nationalised industries as a whole as in 1989-90.

Under the new system, all businesses will benefit from the assurance, written into statute, that the rate poundage cannot rise each year by more than the rate of inflation, and may rise by less. This compares with the old system by which, between 1979-80 and 1989-90, non-domestic rate poundages rose by around 37 per cent. more than inflation nationally and by between 34 per cent. and 45 per cent. more than inflation in North Yorkshire. This cannot happen in future and all businesses are getting a good long-term deal from the new system, since they are now protected from real increases in the cost of local authority

[Mr. Christopher Chope]

services. These will now fall on the community charge payer, to whom authorities are accountable through the ballot box, or to the Exchequer.

We estimate that, if the old system had been in place this year, in the light of the local authorities' spending decisions, there would have been an additional burden on businesses of about £1 billion. That is the extent of the savings from which businesses will be able to benefit in the first year of the new arrangements.

I hope that I have been able to allay some of my right hon. Friend's concerns.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-eight minutes to One o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 8 June 1990

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITION

Religious Education

9.34 am

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I have the honour to present a petition to the honourable Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled, in the name of Mrs. Denise Bell of 42 Devonshire road, Ealing W5, and hundreds of my constituents and constituents throughout the borough of Ealing:

"The Humble Petition of the residents of the London Borough of Ealing sheweth

That the agreed syllabus of religious education for the London Borough of Ealing contains no specifically Christian content and that this contravenes the intention of your honourable House in passing Section 8 and Schedule 1 of the 1988 Education Reform Act requiring all new agreed syllabuses 'to reflect mainly Christian religious traditions'."

My constituents and the petitioners are concerned that the syllabus produced by the former Labour council in Ealing, but still in force, contains no reference to the Bible, Jesus or God and no formal or informal indication of what aspects of Christianity might be taught and how the subject might be taught. The petitioners seek not to exclude the teaching of other world religions in schools, but to have the founder of Christianity, Jesus Christ, mentioned in the syllabus in which Christianity is required to be central, and they are determined about it. They look to the Secretary of State for Education and Science, to the House and to the Government to direct that changes be made. The new council shows sympathy to the petitioners' attitude. They hope that the Government and the council will come together and produce a syllabus which is directly Christian-centred but not exclusively so. The petition concludes:

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House will urge the Secretary of State for Education to direct Ealing local education authority immediately to withdraw its agreed syllabus and adopt a new agreed syllabus with clear and specific Christian content.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, &c.

To lie upon the Table.

Taxation

9.36 am

Mr. Speaker: We now come to the debate on the burden of taxation.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Last night, as you know only too well, there was a long statement on beef and all the rest of it. I assumed that this morning there would be an announcement of another statement to be made by a Minister—about the scandalous announcement of an increase of 6·5 per cent. over and above inflation for water prices for the next five years. Has anyone informed you that the Secretary of State for the Environment will come to the House to make a statement on that scandalous matter? Water has been privatised. People are lining their pockets.

Mr. Speaker: Order. No request for such a statement has been made to me yet, but it does not have to be made until 10 o'clock, so one may well come. I think we should leave it at that.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The subject that we are about to embark upon is taxation, its impact on many people in this country, and the serious effect of the Government's measures. Part of the debate will be about the poll tax. On top of the poll tax people have to pay their water charges. Might not it be appropriate for the Government to take action to get the Secretary of State for the Environment to appear during the debate, so that that subject can be aired, if no statement is to be made?

Mr. Speaker: These are interesting arguments which could well be advanced during the debate.

9.38 am

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): I wish to call attention to the taxation burden under Conservative Governments and I beg to move,

That this House notes that, despite savage cuts in the quality of public services, the burden of taxation has risen under this Government to a level higher than under any previous Government; that for most households income tax cuts have been outweighed by the growing burden of less fair taxes such as the poll tax and VAT; that national insurance contributions have been cynically used as an additional tax while benefits have been cut or abolished and that the combined effect of the Government's policies is that 320,000 low-paid workers face a combined marginal tax and benefit-withdrawal rate of 70 per cent. or more.

The debate will centre on destroying one of the Government's most carefully manufactured myths—that they are competent, fair and capable of managing a one-nation state. To place the debate in context, it is essential to remind ourselves of the current state of the economy and its relationship to the Chancellor of the Exchequer's 1990 Budget statement. There has been a sharp slowdown in growth. We have the highest interest rates in Europe. They have to be compared with West Germany's at 8 per cent. and France's at 10 per cent. Inflation is rising, and will continue to rise for a considerable period. The balance of trade deficit stands at almost £21 billion, imports are at their highest-ever levels and the overall tax burden is up yet again—to 37 per cent. of gross domestic product—that is without oil taxes—

[Mr. Ian McCartney]

compared with 34 per cent. when the Government took office in 1979. It is a far cry from the heady days of the 1979, 1983 and 1987 Conservative manifestos.

When I was looking at research material for the debate, I thought that it was important to be fair to the Government—at least at the commencement of my speech—by starting at the beginning of the Government's term in office so that when I compare tax burdens I do so over the period of the last decade, not over a short period, and relate them to the promises and statements that were made when the Government were first elected in 1979. I was therefore grateful to receive from the research department at the Conservative party's headquarters copies of the 1979, 1983 and 1987 manifestoes. As a Scot, I am very glad that there was no charge for them.

On page 13—lucky for some—of the 1979 manifesto there is the statement under the heading "Cutting Income Tax":

"We shall . . . simplify taxes—like VAT: and reduce tax bureaucracy."

I shall return to that later. A later paragraph under the same heading says:

"We must therefore be prepared to switch to some extent"—

that is the operative phrase—

"from taxes on earnings to taxes on spending. Value Added Tax does not apply,"—

the comma is very important—

"and will not be extended, to necessities like food, fuel, housing, and transport. Moreover the levels of state pensions and other benefits take price rises into account."

No mention is made of a promise to break the link between pensions and earnings. That was completely ignored, but was implemented immediately after the election. The 1979 manifesto's language was misleading and deceitful. The Government's real intention to switch the tax burden to the majority of the public—those with incomes of less than £20,000 a year, pensioners, the low paid and the most vulnerable who are in receipt of state benefits—was not made known. All that the 1979 manifesto said was that the Conservatives would "simplify taxes—like VAT". Where was the promise in the manifesto to increase VAT from 8 to 15 per cent.? They said:

"We must therefore be prepared to switch to some extent from taxes on earnings to taxes on spending."

The manifesto did not include the promise to increase indirect taxation to over 52 per cent. of all tax revenues. The manifesto was a deceitful attempt to ensure that the public did not know in advance of the election the real intentions of the incoming Conservative Government.

The weekly VAT bill for a family of four on average earnings amounted to £730 a year in 1989-90—roughly 5 per cent. of the family's earnings. That bill has to be compared with one of just £130 in 1978-79, representing 2·7 per cent. of a family of four's average earnings. National insurance contributions on employees' earnings have risen from 6·5 per cent. in 1978-79 to 9 per cent. today. As a result, a family on average earnings is paying 7·9 per cent. of its gross earnings on national insurance contributions in 1990-91, compared with 6·5 per cent. in 1978-79.

The massive surpluses in the national insurance schemes have not been used to reduce contributions or to increase pensions and other benefits. They have been used to subsidise the move out of state pensions into the private sector. That has led to the loss of millions upon millions of pounds, at the expense of working people who make proportionately far higher contributions to the scheme than do those on much larger incomes. Child benefit—formerly the child tax allowance—has been cut in real terms by £1·75 since 1979. For a family of four, that amounts to a loss of £182 a year.

As a result of those policies, the tax burden under the Government is greater for most taxpayers. If we include national insurance contributions, VAT and the effects of cuts in child benefit we see that the tax burden of a family of four on half average earnings has more than trebled—from 2·4 per cent. of its gross income in 1978-79 to 7·4 per cent. in the current financial year. A family of four on average earnings has seen a rise in its tax burden from 23·6 per cent. of its gross income in 1978-79 to 25·6 per cent. in the current financial year. Furthermore, the poll tax is not included in those figures. Statistics compiled by the House of Commons Library show that, even with rebates, 26 million people have lost out under the poll tax. Those losses affect 73 per cent. of the adult population.

In his 1990 Budget statement the Chancellor of the Exchequer raised income tax by £380 million by freezing the top rate threshold, thereby hitting about 1·7 million taxpayers. The Government go on about how Labour's tax policies will hit middle income taxpayers. According, however, to their own definition of middle incomes, that is precisely what they did in the last Budget, as 1·7 million people with taxable incomes of £20,700—which means that they have a gross income of between £24,000 and £26,000—are paying £380 million more in tax as a result of that freeze.

The Conservative manifesto of 1983 contained a commitment to reduce tax bureaucracy. It said that the Conservative's policies had led to

"greatly reduced tax bureaucracy. Manpower in the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise has fallen from 113,400 in April 1979 to 98,500 in April 1983, and is set to fall further."

What have been the consequences of removing that manpower from the Customs and Excise and Inland Revenue? A report to the House by the National Audit Office in March this year found that £5 billion in taxes had not been collected at the end of 1988 and that since 1978 the number of permanent staff employed on collection had been cut by over 18,000—more than one fifth of the total complement of the department.

An earlier National Audit Office report estimated that national insurance fraud by employers cost about £365 million in lost revenue—£1 million a day. That report was a consequence of the continued campaign in the House by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) through points of order and requests for statements regarding the truth about the cover-up by the Government of that huge loss of revenue.

As a result of the fraud, the Comptroller and Auditor General refused to ratify the Department of Social Security's accounts. The National Audit Office report revealed a huge backlog of returns containing incorrect, incomplete or inconsistent national insurance figures. Only half the target of 200,000 visits by national insurance inspectors to check employers' premises had taken place. An internal Department of Social Security report blamed

"inadequate resources, fragmented and diffused management and an absence of meaningful performance targets."

The Government are soft on big tax dodgers while hounding claimants who are looking for work and those on sickness benefit.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Does my hon. Friend agree that one group of people have benefited greatly from tax cuts—not the people to whom my hon. Friend referred, but the wealthiest 1 per cent. of the population? According to the figures issued by the House of Commons statistics office, the wealthiest 1 per cent. have cumulatively reaped the benefit of £26·2 billion worth of tax cuts in the first 10 years of Conservative Government. That figure is almost equivalent to the amount of money we need to run the national health service for a year.

Mr. McCartney: My hon. Friend is correct. I shall demonstrate later that not only the wealthiest 1 per cent. of the population but the 13 per cent. below them have accumulated the overwhelming majority of tax cuts afforded under the Conservative Government. To pay for that, indirect taxation has increased and the position of those on benefit and those seeking additional benefit has been marginalised so that they are paying the equivalent of between 70 and 90 per cent. because of tax margins.

The Conservative claim of fairness in the distribution of the tax burden is the most fraudulent of all. As a percentage of gross domestic product, non-oil taxes are forecast to rise to 37 per cent. this year compared with 36·75 per cent. last year and 34 per cent. in the year that the Tory Government came to power.

The Tories talk only about income tax, conveniently forgetting to mention all the taxes that have risen during their years in government. Even when focusing on income tax, they never point out that some have gained far more than others, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover pointed out a few moments ago.

Since 1978-79, the average gain from income tax cuts per taxpayer on an income of below £5,000 per annum is a measly £110 in 1990-91. The average gain for a taxpayer on an average income of £10,000 to £15,000 a year is £690 in the current financial year. In contrast, the average gain for a taxpayer on an income of more than £70,000 per annum is £36,060 or £693 per week. Such a taxpayer gains more in a week than those on average income gain in an entire year. The super rich on the Conservative Benches —I see that the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) is here for the debate—argue that the rich need incentives to make them work harder and pay taxes. In Conservative language, incentive is a code word for huge pay rises and unfair tax concessions.

Increases in tax revenues from top-rate taxpayers have occurred because the rich are paying themselves more and not because they are willing to pay more tax. The Government argue that cutting the top rate of tax has led to an increase in tax revenues. Since the top rate was cut to 40 per cent., liability to the top income tax rate has increased by £3·1 billion or 40 per cent. in cash terms and 15 per cent. in real terms. But why has that happened? Huge pay rises for the rich are one reason why the tax take has been greater. Last July a survey of 86 of Britain's top 100 companies found that their highest paid executives had awarded themselves pay increases averaging 27 per cent. —three times the British inflation figure. Since then, a number of new top pay awards have been announced.

The chairman of Glaxo has had a pay rise of 51 per cent. taking his salary to nearly £600,000 per annum. The insurance broker Bill Brown, the highest paid man in the City, has awarded himself a 108 per cent. pay rise and now earns £4·2 million per year. That is his salary and does not count all the other little freebies—legal or illegal—that he no doubt receives from his job in the City. Sir Denys Henderson, the chairman of ICI, has had a 25 per cent. pay rise and now earns £480,000 per annum. Lord Hanson of the Hanson Trust has had a pay rise of 24 per cent. and now earns £1·5 million a year. It does not stop there. What about Tory Members of Parliament and ex-Cabinet Ministers who earn full-time salaries for part-time jobs in the City? The rats are leaving the sinking ship.

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): Given the obvious truth that top pay in Britain is actually rather low in comparison with the United States and most of Europe, for how long does the hon. Gentleman think that the shareholders of Glaxo would benefit from reducing the chairman's salary to the national average wage?

Mr. McCartney: More important than that, I wonder how much the workers of Glaxo would welcome such a pay award, as would all the other workers who are earning less than £80 per week. They earn less in a year than the chairman of Glaxo earns in a day. That is the real issue. We have poverty wages and taxes on the standard of living of low-paid workers. It is clear from that intervention which side Conservative Members are on.

Let us get back to the rats who are leaving the sinking ship. It is important to analyse just what the Government are up to technically and politically.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that the major beneficiaries from privatisation have been the chairmen and directors of the companies that have been privatised? They receive huge salary increases although the companies have not improved in efficiency, and have become less responsive to consumers. Privatisation has been a bad deal for the taxpayer. The people who have benefited have been those involved in the privatisation. Members of Parliament have taken the privatisation through Parliament and then joined the boards of the companies. If that is not sleaze I do not know what is.

Mr. McCartney: My hon. Friend is absolutely right and if he will bear with me for a few more moments I shall read out a list of the sleazy decisions that have been taken by Cabinet members who, within weeks of leaving the Cabinet, appeared on the boards of the companies that they had privatised, or on the boards of other companies. In one case, before the Minister had left the Cabinet there was an announcement that he had been placed on the board of a particular company.

Head of the shopping list must be the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson), whom Conservative Members now blame for all the Government's economic ills. He was the Chancellor to end all Chancellors. The Prime Minister continually referred to him as, "My Chancellor, my Chancellor", yet within weeks he became a non-executive director of Barclays Bank and a part-time consultant to Barclays de Zoete Wedd, the securities arm of Barclays Bank. It is not a bad little earner for a part-time job at £100,000 a year. Then, to top up his salary and pay his expenses, he earns £40,000 a year as a part-time director of an Irish aircraft leasing company.

[Mr. McCartney]

The former Secretary of State for Wales, the right hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker), who has just left the Cabinet, has been appointed a non-executive director of a City securities firm Smith New Court. He has also been approached by N. M. Rothschild and Sons, the company which handled the privatisation of British Gas. I understand that he has joined the board. I do not know whether he has a full-time or part-time job as there has been no official statement yet, but one can rest assured that the pay and conditions are light years ahead of what any normal worker in Britain would expect during his lifetime, never mind in one year.

Mr. Skinner: My hon. Friend refers to the right hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Walker) and the fact that he is now lining his pockets in respect of British Gas. I remind my hon. Friend that the right hon. Gentleman has been round that course before. When he was out of government before he became a director of Slater Walker and what happened? They ran it into the ground and the Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer had to bail out Slater Walker because the right hon. Member for Worcester and his mates had got it into such a state that it was bankrupt. I hope to Christ that the next Labour Government does not have to bail him out again.

Mr. McCartney: I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) will put our minds at rest when he winds up the debate this afternoon.

Most interesting of all is the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), the man who continually attempted to attack workers who were trying to achieve a decent standard of living. He has directorships at BET plc, Manpower employment agency—formerly known as Blue Arrow—British Telecom, the company he privatised, Sears plc, the owners of Selfridges, J. C. Bamford and now he is an unpaid director of *The Spectator:* God help him, he has an unpaid job. In May 1989, *The Times* reported from a filing that Blue Arrow made to the United States Securities and Exchange Commission that the right hon. Gentleman was paid £17,500 a year with an all-expenses paid, company Jaguar, a chauffeur, office secretarial support and membership of the company's private health plan.

These are the people who are in the House on a regular basis undermining the living standards of working people.

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): Did my hon. Friend say that these are the people who are in the House on a regular basis? The right hon. Member to whom he referred, who unfortunately is not present today, is not present very often. Am I right in thinking that he is the same right hon. Member who accused nurses of moonlighting—in other words, drawing a salary, yet disappearing to take other jobs? Will my hon. Friend put my mind at rest? Is he referring to that right hon. Member who is not present today?

Mr. McCartney: I am obviously far too kind. When I say "on a regular basis", I mean that that right hon. Member comes to the House when it matters—when there are votes on cuts in benefit, including housing benefit, implementation of the poll tax and privatisation of the health service. That is the type of regular employment to which I was referring.

Mr. Hoyle: Does my hon. Friend believe the statement by the chairman of British Aerospace to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry when I asked him about his personal adviser, the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit)? The chairman said that the right hon. Gentleman was an unpaid adviser. Surely that goes against everything else that my hon. Friend listed. If the right hon. Gentleman is an unpaid adviser, one wonders what he is getting from British Aerospace.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I warn hon. Members against the tendency to move dangerously near to questioning the integrity of right hon. and hon. Members who are not here.

Mr. Hoyle: I would not question the integrity of any right hon. Member, certainly not the right hon. Member for Chingford. I think that you would agree, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I was only seeking information. I was trying to throw light on that unusual statement by the chairman of British Aerospace. All of us know what an honourable person the right hon. Member is and has been over the years.

Mr. McCartney: I could go on for two hours listing all the sacked Cabinet and non-Cabinet Ministers who immediately on leaving Downing street with a knighthood, ended up in a company along the road from Whitehall on a huge director's salary.

The most interesting person of all those ex-Ministers is Lord Gowrie, the former Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. He had to leave the Cabinet just as his career was blooming because he could not live on his salary of £33,000. To make up for that, he became a director of Global Asset Management, the Ladbroke Group and St. Quentin Ltd., chairman of Sotheby's UK and Sotheby's International, non-executive chairman of one interesting company, the Really Useful Company, and provost of the Royal College of Art.

Contrast that with the incentives to the poor. The Government have reduced their living standards by attacking their weekly income, squeezing them still further into the poverty trap and exploiting them by encouraging low wages, and by higher rents and mortgages, the poll tax and indirect taxation targeted at poor families who have to pay a much greater proportion of their income in taxation than the better off. That is not just an assertion made by the Labour party and other groups involved in the poverty lobbies. As a member of the Social Services Select Committee, I take the House back to that Committee's ninth report, "Social Security: Changes Implemented in April 1988". Paragraph 51 states:

> "Marginal tax rates are instrumental in the effect known as the poverty trap where an increase in earnings can lead to a fall in total income through increased tax and reduced benefits. This is one of the major bugbears of the Social Security system. The Government contends that the current situation has improved substantially on the previous system and that currently there are 'no marginal tax rates above 40 per cent.' and that the maximum marginal reductions of tax and benefit combined do not exceed 100 per cent."

The evidence collated by the Committee resulted in the following response in paragraph 52:

> "The Government also argue that 'for most Family Credit recipients the use of passported benefits is likely to be irregular and infrequent' and that it would therefore be

'neither possible nor meaningful' to try to assess who might have marginal rates exceeding 100 per cent. in any particular week."

That meant that the Government did not want to provide public evidence of the way in which they were attacking those on low incomes. The Committee continued:

"Nevertheless, the figures show that since 1985 there has been a large increase in the number of families with children who are facing marginal rates of more than 70 per cent., from 240,000 in 1985 to 390,000 before the Budget for 1989-90. The introduction of Family Credit has played a significant role in this change. Thus, more people are suffering from the effects of marginal rates, although they are not suffering from rates of more than 100 per cent."

Compare that with the Government's 1988 Budget giving £3 billion of tax cuts, mainly to the top earners. To rub salt in the wound, national insurance contributions now raise 64 per cent. of the revenue raised by income tax. National insurace is now an important "personal tax" which has been pushed up by the Government. They raised the standard national insurance contribution rate from 6·5 to 9 per cent. It is also a "regressive" tax, as the ceiling on national insurance contributions ensures that those on top incomes pay a smaller proportion of tax than those on lower earnings.

It is not just the Labour party or the Tory-dominated Social Services Select Committee or even the figures in the Red Book that say that the Government have increased the burden of taxation on the majority of the British people while giving huge tax advantages to the top 14·5 per cent. of earners. The Low Pay Unit, in its 1989-90 Budget report, entitled "A Major Setback for the low Paid" said:

"After ten years in which the better off have received substantial help in the form of tax cuts, the 1990 Budget gave no help at all to the 7 million low paid who also pay tax. While Mr. Major's first Budget contained tax cuts for companies, savers and the City, it offered nothing to help the poorest wage-earners meet the extra costs of higher rents, mortgages and the poll tax.

In this . . . analysis, we show who has gained and who has lost from the combination of Budget changes and the poll tax when it came into force in April."

The Low Pay Unit said that the direct tax burden on a family of four on half average earnings is now proportionately three times as big as it was in 1978-79. Taking account of the poll tax coming into effect in April, that family will be about £1·80 a week worse off after the Budget changes. In addition, they will have to pay an extra 91p a week in spending taxes. Overall, two households in three will lose. Nearly 60 per cent. of households earning less than £75 a week will lose.

The analysis shows that more people will be drawn into dependence on means-tested benefits. This, combined with the fact that 85,000 more people will be drawn into tax, because allowances have not kept pace with earnings, has resulted in increased numbers caught in the poverty trap. That ugly truth is a far cry from page 13 of the Conservative's 1979 manifesto promise, which states:

"Raising tax thresholds will let the low paid out of the tax net altogether, and unemployment and short-term sickness benefit must be brought into the computation of annual income."

What an affront to working people in 1979 when, in reality, over the next 10 years every Budget was to be a full frontal attack on the low paid and those on benefits.

Most of the losses faced by the poor result from the poll tax, but the Chancellor failed, beyond a largely cosmetic change in capital limits for poll tax rebates, to ease the burden for the low paid. In some respects, he has made matters worse.

I said that a family on half average earnings lost £1·80 a week and that a household on earnings equivalent to the Council of Europe's decency threshold of £163 a week lost £2·54 a week. In addition to that, a close inspection and analysis of the Budget shows that 64 per cent. of households will lose out, some by as much as £15 a week from 1 April this year. Nearly 60 per cent. of households earning below £75 a week, nearly 60 per cent. of home owners and 56 per cent. of tenants will lose out. Three quarters of married couples will lose out, as will 60 per cent. of single households. The average loss to a married couple is more than £2 a week and £2·35 for households with children. Nearly four in five couples in which the wife works will lose on average £2·79 a week. For heads of households earning £157 a week—the Low Pay Unit's threshold of low pay—the changes mean a weekly loss of up to £10 a week.

Let consider tax burdens since 1979. The 1990 Budget did nothing to redress the shift in the burden of direct taxation from the rich to the poor. Families on half average earnings now pay nearly three times as much of their income in direct taxation as they did under the previous Labour Government. The tax burden has risen most steeply for families, largely as a result of the freeze on child benefit, which is a real loss of more than £360 million over a tax year.

Again, I am not the only person saying this. On 4 June I received a letter from the Child Poverty Action Group stating that, in relation to the poverty trap, the burden of taxation and child benefit, the situation is getting worse. The letter said:

"Dear Ian, 350,000 households (1,175,000 individuals) have a marginal rate of tax between 70 and 90 per cent. ie between 70 and 90 pence is withdrawn from every extra pound of their earnings."

We should link that to what is happening to the top 14·5 per cent. of earners in Britain. The letter continued:

"Only 7 per cent. of single and married people pay tax at the higher rate of 40 per cent. the changes in tax over the past 10 years have given huge benefits to the already rich. Tax units earning under £5,000 have gained an average of £110 a year, £480 million in total 2 per cent. of the total in tax cuts given away. Tax units earnings between £10,000 and £15,000 have gained an average of £690 a year, £4,390 million."

That is only 16 per cent. of the total tax cuts. The letter continued:

"For tax units at the very top end, earning £70,000 or more, they have gained on average £36,060 a year."

That is a staggering £5,770 million or 21 per cent. of the total tax cuts which has gone to the small group of the highest earners in Britain. That is the reality of the Government's income tax cuts over the past 10 years.

The CPAG's letter went on:

"the burden of overall taxation has in fact increased for the average taxpayer (married couples with a non-earning wife) —in 1978-79 they paid 14·4 per cent. in income tax, 6·5 per cent. national insurance and 2·7 per cent. VAT. (26·3 per cent. in total). In 1990-91 the equivalent figures will be 12·7 per cent., 7·9 per cent. and 5 per cent."

That is an increase of 25·6 per cent. So much for a Government elected on the basis that they would cut the tax burdens for those on middle incomes and for the poor.

According to the CPAG letter, if we consider income tax and national insurance alone

"in 1989-90 the tax burden for those with income under £5,000 increased by 37 per cent., while it decreased by 46 per cent. for those earning £70,000 and above.

The Chancellor could have increased child benefit by £2·45 a week per child (and equivalent amounts in income support and child benefit) for the cost of a 1p cut in the basic rate of

[Mr. McCartney]

tax. This would be a fairer way of handing out money than increasing tax allowances or reducing income tax for the very privileged and very rich in society".

That staggering tale of woe should be added to the disastrous and wholly unfair shift in wealth from the poor to the rich and to the effects of the poll tax, which directly attacks the principle of the ability to pay, undermines family incomes in a hugely disproportionate way and is seen by the nation outside the bunker at No. 10 Downing street as grossly unfair and unworkable. Thirty six million people are now liable to pay the poll tax. At least 26 million of them will be major losers. That is 73 per cent. of the adult population.

Budget changes in capital rules, when applying the rebates, will help only 0·8 per cent. of all poll tax losers. The summer heat is on, but it is not on the Labour party. *The Daily Telegraph* today reported our 23 per cent. lead in the opinion polls. The Conservatives have dipped below 30 per cent. for the first time. If that trend continues the Secretary of State for Defence will be asking for D notices on opinion polls from now until the general election.

The heat is on the Government, the Prime Minister, the Chancellor and the rest of the motley crew. The British people have rumbled the Tory tax cuts fantasy. They realise that over the past 10 years the vast majority of them have been paying additional tax to featherbed the rich and powerful. The Tories' attempt to give the impression that they are the party of low taxation is no more than an ad-man's hype. The brutal truth is there for us all to see.

The Chancellor was interviewed on 22 May this year on Channel 4 News about Government tax policies. *[Interruption.]* Before I quote what the Chancellor said, I will have another glass of gin. I have borrowed this from the hip flask of my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle).

Mr. Hoyle: Actually, it is vodka.

Mr. McCartney: Vladivar, I do apologise. Of course vodka is distilled in Warrington.

In that interview, the Chancellor said

"I'm, I'm not going . . . I, I, I,"—

Clearly, he knew what he was talking about—

"I am going to deal with taxation in Budgets. I have told people what our taxation policy is. They know perfectly well what our policy is."

He was absolutely right. We are perfectly aware of his policies. Those policies have been rejected in the European elections, in local government elections and in the by-elections at Mid-Staffordshire and Bootle.

Over the summer, the Government will wilt under the twin forces of the nation's anger and Labour's plan to bring back fairness, justice and equity into Britain's taxation system. That is a moral and economic crusade and we will win. I commend the motion to the House.

10.17 am

Mr. Steve Norris (Epping Forest): I congratulate the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) on his good fortune in coming first in the ballot. Many of us have worked with him in Committee and we know him to have an absolutely excellent sense of humour which, towards the end of his speech, once he had got the appalling business of delivering it out of the way, began to shine through.

It was pretty obvious to Conservative Members that the hon. Member for Makerfield took his opportunity of coming first in the ballot to raise a subject which, for many of us, was a really funny one for the comrades opposite to debate today. The outrageousness of the subject reminds me of the wonderful story about the chap who murdered his parents and then threw himself on the mercy of the court claiming to be an orphan. To hear the Opposition talking about the appalling evils of high taxation is one of the greatest outrages, albeit a humorous one which it is extremely difficult to take seriously, that we have ever heard in these enjoyable Friday morning debates.

I begin with an admission. For many Conservative Members it is a matter of great regret that it took our Government, who were first elected in 1979, as many years as it did to begin to bring down the burden of taxation to the levels that we are enjoying now. I remember very well the logic of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's position then; it was not an easy position to take, but one that she took with the integrity and strength of character that are entirely typical of her. In 1979, she said,

"Such is the state of the economy that we have inherited that we will never be a party that will follow the policies of the Labour party—a party that taxed to spend, borrowed what it could not tax, and printed what it dared not borrow."

That is the reality of life under the last Labour Government, and there are few people of any political persuasion who are not perfectly aware of it.

Mr Allen: Will the hon. Gentleman help hon. Members by talking in common terms? Will he refer to any reductions in taxation as reductions in income tax, and not confuse them with the reduction in the burden of taxation? Of course we accept that the level of income tax has been reduced, but the real burden of taxation, including value added tax, national insurance contributions and so on, has increased. It would help all hon. Members if we kept our terms clear. The burden of taxation is different from income tax.

Mr. Norris: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that useful clarification. I shall deal with income tax because it is a particularly interesting example of the progress that we have been making. I shall leave the question of the overall burden of taxation in the capable hands of my hon. Friends.

Those who have experience of not only personal tax but corporate tax are in no doubt that the lessons that can be drawn from income tax can equally be drawn from corporation tax. The vivid lessons that we draw from income tax are those that impress themselves most readily on the consciousness of ordinary voters. It was with the greatest regret that one noted that Her Majesty's Government were unable more quickly to reduce the burden from 33p in the pound, which is what it was when we came to office in 1979, to the 25p in the pound rate that we currently enjoy.

The taxation policies of the two sides are fundamentally different in their philosophical nature and approach. The Opposition can never escape from that essential element of Socialism, the politics of envy—the idea that wealth is evil, that success is to be criticised and that those who create and initiate should never be allowed to be rewarded.

We have had a genuinely illuminating exchange. Opposition Members can talk about top salaries, for example, without ever once taking into account the fact that, in the world market, if we want to get top people who

have the entrepreneurial skill and talent to make our companies successful and, as a recent survey showed clearly, the best in performance terms in the whole of Europe—28 of the top 50 companies in Europe were British—that talent might cost money. Why? If we choose to pay those people the national average wage, and no doubt a future Labour Government would intend to do so, they will exercise the choice—provided, of course, that a future socialist Government allowed them exit visas, and experience of previous Socialist Administrations shows that that is not long behind—and I have not the slightest doubt that they will vote with their feet. They will go to Europe, the United States and elsewhere and make other companies the most successful in the world. Who will be the beneficiaries and losers under that policy?

Of course, hon. Members know that to juxtapose a man earning £750,000 a year with somebody earning £60 a week is not to look at one of the most important social dilemmas that a free market is likely to present. That must be a matter of concern to all hon. Members. Conservative Chancellors have never broken from the tradition that in their Budgets they, too, are involved in the process of redistributing incomes. That is what differential rates of direct taxation are all about.

The cardinal difference between the approaches of the two supplicants for votes is that the vision of the gulf between us drives Opposition Members to destroy incentive and success and to believe that one somehow makes the poor richer by making the rich poorer. The belief that property is theft contrasts starkly with Conservative Members' belief that there will be hewers of wood and drawers of water, that we must recognise skills and enterprise, and that we must reward it if we want to keep it. It is only by allowing the creation of wealth that we can understand the mechanism by which we distribute it.

Mr. Hoyle: The hon. Gentleman is making a great point about a possible brain drain under the future Labour Government. Is he aware that there is at present a brain drain of scientists whom we can ill afford to lose? Scientists Abroad, which is supported by all hon. Members, has drawn attention to that fact. The Government are driving those people overseas. Is the hon. Gentleman aware of that? He should be, given his position as Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, and he should be concerned about it.

Mr. Norris: I have heard various debates between my right hon. and hon. Friends at the Department of Education and Science and Opposition spokesmen in which there has been a vigorous discussion of the validity of the statistics that have been adduced about the apparent brain drain. Many studies have concluded that there has been a net migration to Britain of people from elsewhere in the world to exploit the opportunities of British universities. The hon. Gentleman will know that, as a proportion of gross domestic product, our research and development expenditure is higher that it is in Japan and the United States of America. We need not detain ourselves indefinitely on that point. I wish to refer, as I am sure the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) would want me to, to taxation.

Mr. Hoyle: What percentage of research and development money is spent on military expenditure as opposed to civil expenditure?

Mr. Norris: The hon. Gentleman makes a valid point that there is a difference between military and civil research and development. I have no doubt that one of the benefits of the peace dividend, as we understand it to be, is that that balance is likely to change. To obfuscate the essential truth of a point that Conservative Members make time and again is, frankly, not relevant to the issue today.

We heard from the hon. Members for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and for Makerfield a typical exchange between a couple of dyed-in-the-wool Socialists. "It's absolutely appalling, isn't it, that people should be rewarded on the basis of what they are worth. It is appalling and morally corrupt and we should stamp on the idea that people should earn more than the national average wage and that there should be differences in wealth that might be based on something as peripheral as ability."

My goodness me, we must contrast that view with what is recognised by many western observers who have now had the benefit of examining the Soviet economy in its desperate struggle to turn itself into a free market economy: what the Soviets come up against time and again are not all the other inherent failures of socialism, with which we could occupy all our deliberations this morning if we had a mind to, but the fact that, when there is absolutely no distinction in terms of reward between those who might take on responsibility for management and those who might as well have a cushy life pushing a broom, people simply cannot be bothered to take on those responsibilities. As a result, the Soviet economy is in a state of total collapse.

That is the reality of the social engineering that lies behind Socialist taxation policy. There can never be merit in taxation policies that do not recognise that incentive is desirable and that success is not a dirty word, but one that we should be prepared to be proud of and to reward.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, East): Does the hon. Gentleman think that it is worth giving way?

Mr. Norris: Yes, of course.

Mr. Brown: I rise to help the hon. Gentleman and to offer him a few words of reassurance from a representative of the hewers of wood. But first I reassure the hon. Gentleman that he will, of course, be allowed to flee the country in the event of a Labour election victory in 1991 or 1992.

On differentials, my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) mentioned the chairman of Glaxo Holdings, who rejoices in the splendidly English name of Sir Paul Girolami, who earned £598,081 last year. Does the hon. Gentleman really think that the chairman of a company the size of Glaxo should be paid just over £0·5 million for a year's work?

Mr. Norris: I am desperately disappointed by the hon. Gentleman's intervention. After all, he is a Front-Bench spokesman for a party that pretends to be a party of Government. We all enjoyed the speech of the hon. Member for Makerfield. After all, Fridays in this place can be desperately tedious and it is a good thing to kick off with a fun debate in which the Opposition pretend that they are horrified by high taxation. I congratulate the hon. Member for Makerfield on his very good choice of subject.

However, it is interesting to hear a Labour Front-Bench spokesman laying down a clear marker about the way in

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which a future Labour Government would regard a company with the history of Glaxo. I had not come to this debate prepared to discuss the history of Glaxo, but I shall link what I know of it to the observations of the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle). The hon. Gentleman will find that Glaxo has one of the best records for R and D of any major company in Britain. It is an excellent company, which is taking on more workers all the time and developing life-saving products for the benefit of the British economy and others. I believe that the shareholders of Glaxo, who are ultimately repsonsible for approving the salary accorded to their chairman, took those factors into account when fixing his remuneration and I, for one, am not in the business of second-guessing them.

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that quite apart from the new drugs that it has supplied, Glaxo provides a great deal of assistance to our national health service, without which it would not be so successful?

Mr. Norris: My hon. Friend is entirely correct.

It is a serious matter to hear Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen making statements that appear to sit uncomfortably alongside the progammes in which some of their hon. Friends are supposed to be indulging when they go round the City, clapping people on the shoulders, saying, "Do not worry, when a Labour Government come in, you will be all right on the national average wage because we will have a wonderful welfare system." It is interesting that over the past few weeks the financial press has made it clear that, despite the Labour party's protestations to the contrary, the City has not been conned by a word of what the Labour party has said. It is when the mask slips and one hears such observations from Labour party spokesmen that one realises why the City has been sensible enough not to be taken in.

The Labour party's argument about the evils of wealth is invalid in practical terms. I refer to the figures, which the hon. Member for Makerfield was sensible enough to acknowledge, which show clearly that as the burden of the top rates of tax has fallen, the amount paid in tax by the top 5 per cent. of earners has comprised a bigger proportion of our total tax take. It is extraordinary that even the Labour party's theorists accept—this acceptance is not yet circulating among Labour Back-Benchers—that there is a law of diminishing returns in terms of top tax rates. If one were to push top tax rates back up to their level under the last Labour Government—for the benefit of the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen), I am referring to both income tax and corporation tax —people would simply put their incomes elsewhere.

As anyone who was involved in business in the 1970s knows—the figures can be examined—corporation tax became a voluntary tax because companies employed armies of lawyers and accountants to work their way through page upon page of Labour tax law. The rates were so punitive that it was in companies' interests to develop one of the most extraordinary industries of all—the tax avoidance industry. One would have thought that the Labour party would have learnt the lesson that as the top tax rate has been reduced to 40 per cent., the top 5 per cent. of earners are no longer contributing 25 per cent. of the total tax take, but 31 per cent.

Any hon. Member who has experience of business knows that there is one great difference between the way in which company financiers looked at their businesses in the 1970s and the way in which they did so in the 1980s. In the 1970s when I was involved in running the finances of a company, three quarters of our time was spent on tax planning and only 25 per cent. on managing the business. The great thing now is that the proportions have been reversed. Companies are devoting their time and their financial resources to making their businesses more efficient and entrepreneurial. Fortunately, tax planning occupies much less time because the rates are perceived as being bearable and reasonable.

In a sense, one could set all that to one side, except for one vital consideration. The Labour party not only deludes itself into believing that the poor are made richer by making the rich poorer and that the interests of those who are poor, homeless and who do not receive adequate services are served by attacking the mythical super-rich —who, incidentally, on the best estimates contribute about one fortieth of what might be needed to finance Labour's programmes, if one aggregates the spending that would be needed for all the statements that Labour party spokesmen have made—but it commits an even greater philosophical illogicality because none of its great discussions on how the wealth of the country is to be dispersed has ever referred to the way in which that wealth is created.

As Conservative Members have often said, the difference between socialism and capitalism—which is, after all, the essence of the difference in the taxation policies of the two main parties in the Chamber—is that socialism is what one believes in at the age of 20 and capitalism is what one realises is right when one is 30. There is an old adage about that, but I shall not bore hon. Members with it because we have all heard it many times. The fact is that capitalism works. Even with what Opposition Members would regard as its manifest inequities, capitalism allows us to create the wealth with which we can then begin to address Britain's social problems.

The country as a whole, not only Conservative Members, has seen the truth that in the Britain of the 1970s, a Labour Government, who were elected on what I grant them were the best possible motives, genuinely believed that the problems of our nation—neither side would dispute the problems of homelessness, poverty and social disequilibrium—could be addressed by a high-spend, high-tax, high-borrow and high-print policy. However, those great and magnificent plans crumbled into the dust because the Labour Government never recognised that to finance public expenditure at any level, one must first set in place the economic conditions that will allow wealth to be created.

Whatever the economic difficulties of Britain, whether short term or longer term, underlying difficulties, the Conservative Government are dedicated to the proposition that a country must generate wealth before it can afford to indulge itself in discussions about how that wealth is to be dissipated. No wealth creator worthy of the name seriously believes a word of the policies being peddled by the Labour party on taxation. We know that by effectively removing the ceiling on national insurance

contributions and introducing an immediate 50 per cent. top tax rate, Labour will tax people at 60 per cent. immediately. We also know from the commitments that we hear from Labour Front-Bench spokesmen every day of the week for every Department that they shadow that a Labour Government could never keep pace with Labour's spending commitments.

What price the prospect of returning to the days under a Labour Government when we enjoyed—if that is the appropriate word—a rate of tax payable on so-called unearned income of 98p in the pound? The Labour Government wondered why capital and enterprise fled Britain when the prospect was working to make one's company or oneself a pound and being left with tuppence. If I may be forgiven for using the worst politician's euphemism of all time, in the real world people are not prepared to work for tuppence in the pound. Yet that is the prospect under the next Labour Government.

When the mask slips we see our prospects under a Labour Government—a society in which wealth is regarded de facto as evil and reward is something that must be attacked. The salary of the chairman of Glaxo must be reduced because it is somehow obscene for shareholders to determine the appropriate level of his reward. The Labour party assumes that Glaxo will still be the thrusting company which my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) so accurately described. Contrary to what the hon. Member for Makerfield said about a lead or otherwise in the opinion polls, as is happening now, the policies——

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): Does my hon. Friend agree that the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) has scored a remarkable own goal in suggesting that there is something unacceptable in Sir Paul Girolami of Glaxo being paid £0·5 million? First, the British pharmaceutical industry is an international leader. No pharmaceutical company in the world has the same track record in research and development—to which my hon. Friend referred—or the same quality of products in its current registration pipeline. If the Labour party suggests that a putative Labour Government should ensure that the chairman of Glaxo was not paid at the same level as the chairmen of Merck, Eli Lilley, Bayer, Hoechst, Boehringer or Ciba-Geigy, it is declaring war on one of the most successful industries——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is making an intervention, I hope, not a speech.

Mr. Norris: It is entirely proper of you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to intervene but I was enthralled by my hon. Friend's intervention. At least he had the decency to pronounce the name of the chairman of Glaxo correctly. There was a hint of real sarcasm—*Hansard* will not have conveyed it, so I wish to place it on the record—in the way in which the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East expressed the name of the chairman of Glaxo. That told us a great deal about the Labour party's attitude towards business generally. If I have any qualification to add to the statement of my hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies), with which I entirely agreed, it is that not only in pharmaceuticals—which has brought many benefits, for example, to the north-east where the industry is a large employer and to the whole country—but in industry generally the approach of the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East will be the hallmark of a future Labour Government.

Not only has the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East predictably shot himself in the foot, but the hon. Gentleman who moved the motion has given us a useful weapon to use in the battle of convincing sensible people, who are as yet uncommitted about how they will employ their vote at the next general election, to vote for us. We have been given some very useful ammunition.

Despite the introduction of all the filofaxes and red braces of the Labour party, and the fact that they have listened to the advice of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Budget debate that the most sensible thing that they could do was to smarten up and shut up—my goodness that is what they are doing—and even though Labour Members are under strict instructions not to say a word about the future spending plans of a Labour Government or their real attitude to business, it is on these quiet Friday mornings that we see the true face of Labour in the form of an innocent little motion. Guess what? It has not changed one iota from the old familiar face that we knew and, in a way, some of us even loved. I am rather glad that it has not changed. It would have been terribly boring if all that stuff about mobile telephones and braces had moved from these Benches, where it is rampant, to the Opposition Benches. I love the old class struggle. It is so pathetic as an intellectual argument that one can derive real pleasure from debates such as this.

Mr. Matthew Carrington (Fulham): My hon. Friend is right that we are now seeing tooth and claw the politics of envy of the Labour party. It is the same politics of envy that we saw in the 1970s. The people on whom the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) based his arguments were those on half average earnings. Of course, the people on half average earnings when the politics of envy were in full flood under the Labour Government saw their real take-home pay increase by a grand total of 4 per cent. over the period of that Government. Under this Government, the real take-home pay of the same group, with all the problems that Labour Members say that they have, has increased by about 27 per cent. That is the difference between the failure of the politics of envy and the success of the politics of rewarding enterprise.

Mr. Norris: I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend. I hope that he may catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, during the debate to expand on those points.

I finish with this thought. Conservative Members still regard the burden of taxation in Britain as too high. We believe that, in general, taxation is a disincentive to intitative and enterprise. It is much preferable to finance an expanding public sector from a smaller slice of the infinitely larger cake that we can create in terms of the wealth of the nation.

I hope that Her Majesty's Government will continue to reduce taxes only when it is prudent to do so. Their record over a decade shows that that is exactly what they will do. [HON. MEMBERS: "The hon. Gentleman hopes so."] I do not have to hope because I know that the Government are committed to further reductions in taxation and I look forward to them as soon as they can arise. I say that not out of any wish simply to massage the paypackets of people in the top 5 per cent. of income, but because, as my

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hon. Friend the Member for Fulham (Mr. Carrington) rightly said, our policy has delivered better living standards, record numbers in employment, record output, record tax revenues and, therefore, record public expenditure in real terms for all the citizens of Britain to enjoy.

The motion is amusing and trivial as it relates to the world that ordinary British people recognise. We should reject it out of hand. The gap between the two sides on tax and the central mangement of the economy is as chasmic as ever. The choice which the British people will be offered at the general election could not be starker. It is the choice between an economic system that has been roundly rejected throughout eastern Europe, where it held sway for 40 years at the point of a gun, and a system that has delivered record prosperity to the people of Britain, as I hope it will continue to do in the years to come.

10.49 am

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): It is always a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) whose bunkum is always delivered with great elegance and style. He is here on a temporary visit once more, this time representing Epping Forest. I only hope that when we are in government some opportunity at a by-election will be found for him, so that he can return again to the House, representing one of the few Conservative seats that will be left.

The hon. Gentleman and I first clashed in the Committee considering the Football Spectators Bill. His arguments were based on the political philosophy and values of Swindon Town. In other words, one makes one's way as best one can and uses the system to achieve one's ends. He argues with style and even seems to believe what he says.

Mr. Norris: Is the hon. Gentleman saying that the Labour party approves of the demotion of Swindon Town from the first to the third division?

Mr. Barnes: As a Sunderland supporter, I certainly approve. I hope that the football league will act correctly and say that Sunderland should be promoted to the vacated position. However, as I live near Sheffield Wednesday, my remarks may not endear me to some of my constituents.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) on his motion, especially on referring to the unfairness of taxation burdens. He stressed that a great number of flat-rate taxes had been introduced and that the burden of taxation had been shifted by changing the method of collection, which had produced greater problems and greater levels of taxation than in the past. He includes the poll tax within the flat-rate provisions.

I am pleased that the poll tax is mentioned in the motion because otherwise Conservative Members, making use of the sophistry that they always produce on this matter, would argue that we could not discuss it in this debate because it is not a tax, but a charge. They argue that the poll tax is a flat-rate charge, like goods in a shop, whereas taxation is different. The motion correctly recognises that the poll tax is a tax.

The poll tax has massive and serious effects on masses of people who are criticised and accused of the politics of envy. The politics of envy are significant in today's society because some people have a great deal to be envious of. They are envious of a decent way of living, a reasonable home and the opportunity to bring up a family in decent conditions. Those are basic provisions and any reasonable Government, even if they believe in the engine of the market and capitalism, should be redistributing them.

Mr. McCartney: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is not the politics of envy, but the politics of ambition? Working people desire a proper standard of living for their families—their children and their grandchildren. Because of the Government's taxation and other policies, no matter how hard those people try, however hard they work, even if it is seven days a week, and however much they are exploited, they never get out of the hole. They are not envious of greed, but are ambitious to have the quality of life that others seem to have as a matter of right, whether or not they work hard.

Mr. Barnes: The problem with the word "envy" is that it suggests that the legitimate ambitions of poorer people to improve their conditions are in some way unreasonable and can only be seen as envy of what others have got justifiably, or so it is held, by their endeavours. Often those endeavours are associated with luck, such as where people are born and their power in society. Many people wish to get in a little on that act. They want to redistribute wealth to ensure that their living standards are decent and dignified. They want society to adjust, so that they have a proper role to play within it. The notion of democracy is important in that. Tory Members should realise that through their taxation policies and the burdens that result, they are hammering the operation and functioning of democratic society.

Since the franchise was extended in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, working-class people have used the vote to seek an improvement in their circumstances and some redistribution of the wealth produced, without ever having adopted a policy of an outright socialist nature to change the basis of society. They have tried to use the democratic system to improve their lot.

The first improvement probably came in the 1870s with the Education Act. That followed the enfranchisement in 1867 of various sections of the working class—the more skilled labour—in urban areas. Foster argued that we must educate our masters. People used pressure to ensure that it was recognised that they had a right to education. Now that very education is under serious attack as a result of the poll tax which is considerably reducing the sums available to local education authorities to run a decent education system. Democracy requies that a Government should respond to the concerns of society. If whole sections of society begin to be detached from the democratic process and feel that there is nothing in it for them, serious social consequences will result.

As I said earlier, I wish to refer to the poll tax in particular. It is the most unfair taxation system that has ever been introduced into any western democratic system. The poll tax that existed in the 14th century operated in three stages. Initially, there was a flat-rate payment. Then there was a graduated contribution, such as this

Government may be pushed towards. Finally, as there was so much evasion among the upper classes, the flat-rate method was reintroduced, which led to the 1381 rebellion.

The Government should be clear that if they pursue their present tactics, they will start to break the social bond. They should remove the poll tax because of its serious democratic implications. Economic and social policies cannot be divorced from the operation of democracy.

Under the poll tax everyone within a given district area except for those who are eligible for rebates and a small number who are exempt, pays the same, be they a duke or a dustman, a miner, a midwife or a millionaire. That cannot be right. The Government argue that the total tax burden should be considered because, when we do so, we see that the rich pay a higher rate of tax than the poor, so that adjusts the picture. Yet we know that that, too, is under attack. Indeed, we should probably look at the general pattern, as my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield did, and point out that the total burden has increased, and that the maldistribution involved in certain forms of taxation has been seriously worsened.

There are pressures to achieve some harmonisation of the charges. The objective is a common payment system that operates throughout the country. There will be a flat-rate payment irrespective of the financial standing of the individual. There are exemptions, but they are not based on any principle of decency, fairness or justice. We are told that the principle of accountability is being applied, but that is what is wrong with the poll tax. Accountability means attaching the poll tax to the electoral register. There are two registers that are closely interlinked and interconnected.

Who are exempted from the poll tax? There are some who deserve to be, but they have been exempted because they happen not to be on the electoral register, not because they are deserving cases. The severely mentally handicapped are thereby excluded from having to pay poll tax but the severely physically handicapped, who may well need the same provisions as are required by the severely mentally handicapped merely to exist, are not excluded. One group is on the electoral register and the other is not.

There are many others who do not deserve to be exempted from contributing through taxation to the services from which they benefit. Visiting overseas forces were subject to the rating system, but they are to be exempted from poll tax charges. Diplomats, who have immunity from so many things to which others have accountability, will not be subject to the poll tax. If anyone goes to prison, he is liable to be exempted. That is because the prisoner will not be on the electoral register, unless he is imprisoned for not having paid poll tax. There will be second-class prisoners who will be obliged to pay the charge.

The Government had the clever notion that they would introduce the pressure of imprisonment, so there will be imprisonment for the poorest in our society. It will be a threat for those who do not have earnings to attach and who do not have sufficient goods in their home to make them subject to the operation of the bailiff system. The Government recognised that there had to be a fall-back penalty to catch the poor. The result is that many people are drifting into debt. There is increasing indebtedness under this Government as people try to overcome the pressures that are introduced by poll tax charges.

Much is made of the rebate system, but those who benefit from it often find that their circumstances are worse than they were under the rating system, which similarly entitled them to rebates. The Government worsened the rebate arrangements by introducing the 20 per cent. poll tax charge, which is linked to housing benefit.

Mr. McCartney: The introduction of the poll tax was based in part upon electoral accountability. It was argued that those who pay poll tax, even the so-called minimum 20 per cent., have a responsibility and a right to expect services provided by the local authority to be Government approved. How does that argument square with the Government's policy of spending £4 million of taxpayers' money to advertise in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Canada and Australia? The Government are appealing to those who left the United Kingdom sometimes over 20 years ago —in many instances people who ratted on this country or who benefited from the apartheid system in South Africa —to register here and to vote in the next general election. How does that square with the so-called accountability that poll tax is said to introduce?

Mr. Barnes: My hon. Friend has made a powerful intervention. I do not favour the notion that the payment of a tax is a qualification to vote. One of my major objections to the poll tax is that the franchise extends only to those who pay the charges. As a result of many inconsistencies there is, in effect, a voluntary franchise. There is so much fiddling and manipulation. Expatriate voters will not pay poll tax charges and neither will they pay any of the other forms of taxation that are referred to in the motion. Worse still, they do not receive any of the benefits that can be provided in a democratic society. Therefore, they will not be concerned about the quality of life in the United Kingdom. This debate is of no significance to overseas voters but it is of great significance to the many poor people in this country—those on average or below average earnings who will find themselves in great difficulty because of the many flat-rate taxes that are being levied on them. This taxation will be increased by the introduction of poll tax charges. Another significant factor will be the increase in water rates, an issue which was raised on points of order at the beginning of the debate.

Those who can afford to contribute to the provision of local services will enjoy fantastic benefits under the poll tax system. Many hon. Members, especially Conservative Members, will benefit by as much as £1,000, £2,000 or £3,000 a year. The money that they do not contribute will have to be found elsewhere. In other words, it will have to be paid by others, including those who are eligible for a rebate. As I have said, the Government's policies are supposed to assist the poorest, but many of those who are on rebates will have to pay more than ever in poll tax charges.

There has been talk about free riders, and the term has been applied to those who have said that they will not pay poll tax charges. The free riders are not those who oppose the poll tax by the tactic of non-payment. Rather, the free riders are wealthy people who have enjoyed fantastic reductions in their contributions to local services with the introduction of the poll tax, and who will continue to enjoy them year after year for as long as the system is in place. They will be the perpetual free riders. They will be riding

[Mr. Barnes]

on the backs of the poor and ordinary people in our society who have little to manage on and who in many instances are in the most desperate circumstances.

Mr. McCartney: Is my hon. Friend aware that the poll tax is so unpopular that the majority of those who benefit from it are extremely unhappy about their position? There has been a remarkable sea change in attitudes in Britain over the past decade. There has been a fundamental change from "Me, me" to thinking about others. That is one of the major reasons why the Government are running into trouble. I am dealing with the case of a 19-year-old student who is studying for more than 21 hours a week. Her mother and father are unemployed. On her 19th birthday her income support of £27 a week was withdrawn. Her parents have no income and she has to pay 20 per cent. of a poll tax charge of £382. As I have said, she has no income. All her benefits were withdrawn on her 19th birthday.

Mr. Barnes: The longer the poll tax operates the clearer will become the circumstances of individuals, and more and more cases of the sort to which my hon. Friend has referred will emerge. There are those who are subject to the standard community charge as distinct from the collective community charge. They will have to pay a charge on second properties, but some of them may be obliged to own those properties. For example, a pub landlord might have a small terraced house in the street next to the one in which his pub is situated. He needs to have that property because he could be required to leave the pub at any time.

There have been numerous alterations to the law and to legal agreements following the introduction of the poll tax and the abolition of the rating system. The result has been a dramatic increase in social problems. Many people never realised that they would face deprivation because of the high charges.

The Government say that because it is a new tax there are complexities, but that they will get round to adjusting things. Some people cannot wait for that and have been driven into increasing indebtedness. They have failed to pay not because they are part of an orchestrated compaign not to do so, but because they cannot meet that bill.

The Government are reluctant to give us any decent information about the levels of taxation raised in different areas and the link between that and the grant provided by them. Perhaps by the end of the year we will be in a position to understand the full pattern. I have tabled a host of written questions but it is like detective work trying to draw bits of information from the Government. I have sought to discover how much of the money raised is accounted for by grant, the national business rate and the poll tax. In Committee and in the propaganda produced for the poll tax we were told that roughly 50 per cent. of moneys would come from Government support, 25 per cent. from the national business rate and only 25 per cent. from the poll tax. It is clear that that has not happened. The only way in which the Government could try to claim that some 48 per cent. of the sum involved comes from them is to throw everything into that figure. They would have to include all the provisions connected with their contributions to the rebate scheme and all Government grants inside and outside the aggregate external financial provisions. However, if one merely takes into account the revenue support grant and the figures that make up the standard spending assessment, one is confronted with an entirely different pattern. Instead of 50 per cent. being contributed from the Government it is clear that contributions from the Government, the national business rate and poll tax payers are equivalent to one third each. That represents a serious maldistribution among these groups.

Instead of the Government providing twice as much in grant as is raised through the poll tax, they are providing the same amount, or perhaps even less. If the Government lived up to the promises they gave when they were pushing the tax through Committee and in their party-political broadcasts there would be a significant reduction in the level of the poll tax. Instead, the Government have engaged in a nonsense of fiddling the SSA and a poll tax-capping operation. That operation is directed at Labour authorities that are desperately trying to provide services for the mentally handicapped, as well as services such as meals on wheels and educational provision. Money will be taken away from those authorities and it will be yet another windfall for those who are already saving between £1,000 and £3,000 a year. Although that money might come as a relief to those in poorer circumstances it will not represent much of a relief for those on rebate.

Instead of poll tax capping the Government should provide a grant in place of the money raised through the poll tax in those areas. The poll tax-capped authorities would then be able to provide the services for which people have always voted. Those services represent a redistribution of the fruits of the engine of capitalism and market forces, which now run rampant in society. The majority of voters have little or no stake in the operation of society and therefore there should be a redistribution of resources to them.

The social, democratic and constitutional consequences of the poll tax are horrendous. The poll tax has led to a fiddling of the franchise based on the principle of accountability. If we compare mid-term estimates of the number of 18-year-olds in the population with those on the electoral register, we see that 600,000 people are now missing from that register. Throughout the 1980s, there was, as one would expect, a connection between those figures, but in 1987 things began to change. Then, in Scotland, people began to disappear from the register and the same has happened in England and Wales. Now on average 1,000 people per constituency are missing off the electoral register. People in desperate circumstances will take desperate measures and they have sold their franchise rights in an attempt to evade a tax they cannot pay. Such is the fear caused by the poll tax. No Government should put people into such desperate circumstances. That has not happened in Northern Ireland because the poll tax has not been introduced there.

The poll tax has led to a desperate franchise fiddle together with the other fiddles to do with overseas votes mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield —there are many others one could add if this was a general debate about the franchise. The poll tax has had a serious impact on the franchise, but that impact is not uniform. Its impact is felt much more seriously in Glasgow and other major Scottish cities, Liverpool and other odd patches of the country where people have failed to register. In Finchley, the Prime Minister's constituency, 8·5 per cent. of the population are missing from the electoral register

—3·9 per cent. were missing in 1989 and 4·6 per cent. in 1988. Who or what is fiddling the franchise in Finchley and other areas?

Opinion polls suggest that, in various circumstances, the Conservatives might just hold on to Finchley. That does not take into account any expatriate votes that Denis Thatcher has been able to organise for that seat; nor does it take into account those who are missing from the electoral register. The Prime Minister, in a desperate attempt to hold on to her Government as well as her seat, is involved in the most significant fiddle of the franchise in Europe since that perpetrated by Mussolini. I am not saying that it is the same as that undertaken by him; it is a more sophisticated, marginal fiddle. When a Government believe that they should perpetuate their term in office they start fiddling the franchise. Mussolini did it in an exaggerated way, but the Government are more subtle. We have not been able to observe it, nor have we been able to speak about it as we should have in this House.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): As the Member representing Barnet may I point out that there has been a concerted attempt to improve the accuracy of the electoral register throughout the borough, as my hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman) can confirm? The register was seriously inaccurate because the dead and those who had moved from the area were still appearing on it. The improvements may account for the drop that the hon. Gentleman has noticed. Can he enlighten the House about what happened in the St. Pauls ward in Finchley during the local elections when the three Labour councillors lost?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is difficult to see any connection between that and the motion on the Order Paper.

Mr. Barnes: The Prime Minister wrote to me about the franchise after I had raised with her the type of difficulties about which I am speaking. She wrote that the shortfall that had occurred in the franchise in 1988 had probably been due to the postal strike of September of that year. But there was no postal strike in September 1987, at the very time when a similar shortfall was occurring in Scotland.

It is odd that while in certain places, such as Liverpool and Glasgow, a tidying-up of the electoral register is taking place, a similar exercise is not occurring in other areas. The shortfall is often linked to the working-class make-up of areas, even sections of Barnet.

In 1988 in the Rochester and Medway area there was a shortfall of 11 per cent. in electoral registrations. The situation has improved somewhat, perhaps because a tidying-up exercise has been happening there. Has some of the shortfall been made up by the use of poll tax information? I understand that the shortfall has fallen from 11 per cent. to about 7·5 per cent. There is a large immigrant population in that area, with many people living in poor circumstances. When large numbers of people live together in households, many of them will not appear on the electoral register.

Unfortunately, those who most frequently are not on the register are the attainers, those coming up to age 18 who were not on previous electoral registers. Generally speaking, one can discover the names of those who are missing—they may be missing for poll tax purposes—because they appeared on previous electoral registers.

With the introduction of the poll tax, we find that the two registers are interlinked by computer in district council areas. It is disgraceful that, living in a democratic society, we should have taken such a step. It has resulted in our having a tax on qualifying to vote. It is like Chile when the referendum took place on Pinochet's future; to qualify to vote, one had to pay the equivalent of a month's employment training money to get on the register. In other words, the vote that took place against him——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I regret having to interrupt the hon. Member, but it seems that he is speaking more about the weaknesses, as he sees them, of the electoral system than about the burden of taxation.

Mr. Barnes: I have endeavoured to point out the problems that the poll tax is creating for the taxation system and the ramifications of that for the living conditions of ordinary people. But those problems have serious democratic implications. I argue that redistributed elements should be a natural part of democratic taxation systems, as is the case in many other countries. We should be debating the nature and extent of our taxation system and whether the burden is too great and causes other problems. We should not have a flat-rate system of taxation which is linked to the electoral register.

I accept that my example of Chile might have taken us far from today's debate. I made the point only to show that the vote that went against Pinochet did not occur on a full franchise, because vast numbers of people did not qualify to register. I fear that we in this country will find ourselves with that type of peculiar democracy—democracy with a bit chipped off, one might say—which could allow odd results to emerge.

In other words, I fear that we shall return to the system we had before the introduction of the universal franchise. That was introduced in two stages. Women finally got the vote on the same basis as men, and the system was based on residence, in 1918 and 1928 respectively. We must at all costs avoid going back to what we appear to have had in some areas with 40 shilling franchises and provisions designed to pull people out of voting.

It seems clear that the introduction of the poll tax is akin to our legislation on representation of the people being amended. I appreciate that new legislation is not bound by earlier legislation, but at present we must operate under the Representation of the People Act 1983, apart from the nonsense of extending its provisions to expatriate voters, an amendment against which I voted at every opportunity.

Mr. John Marshall: How did the shadow Cabinet vote on that?

Mr. Barnes: The members of the shadow Cabinet can make their own speeches. This is my speech.

We in Britain are supposed to have a system of democracy, having fought for it, but many people are now finding that they are oppressed by recent legislation. From the 1275 Statute of Westminster, which allowed free elections, to the latest Representation of the People Act——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It seems to me that the hon. Member is talking much more about the electoral system than about the burden of taxation to which the motion refers. I hope that he will address his remarks more closely to the terms of the motion.

Mr. Barnes: I think that I have said enough to make my argument about electoral representation. I believe that my comments have been relevant to the motion, which refers to the objectionable nature of the taxation burden that has been introduced by the Government, about the shifts that have occurred in the burden of taxation and about the consequences of the poll tax. My argument is that those consequences are not simply of a social and economic nature, but are also of a democratic and constitutional nature.

Twenty Labour authorities have been poll tax capped. The system has been manipulated to enable that to happen because, in terms of expenditure levels, many Conservative authorities—in Oxfordshire, Bedfordshire and elsewhere—should have received the same treatment. There was no reference in the Conservative manifesto to poll tax capping, for it was held that people would be able to decide the levels locally.

The leader of the Conservative party in Doncaster was ousted, but he is haunting the local people, as it were, by the actions of the Secretary of State, who has poll tax capped the area. That, in turn, has led to the destruction of local education and other services which are essential——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The motion refers to public services, but it is not about public services. I hope that the hon. Member will recognise that other hon. Members are waiting to speak to the motion. Will he please address his remarks to the motion or resume his seat?

Mr. Barnes: A constituent of mine wrote a letter which appeared in the local paper on 25 April of this year. John E. Thurley pointed out that on the poll tax form he received, it listed the different amounts available from Government grant, business rates and the amounts that were expected to be raised by the poll tax. He then calculated correctly that those amounts meant that the Government grant amounted to 13·5 per cent., the business rate to 33·4 per cent. and the poll tax payer was expected to pay 53·1 per cent. Those are the figures that the Government oblige councils to publish on the forms that are sent out.

The Government have operated the most nonsensical formula to ensure that certain areas of the country would have to bear that great burden. The formula that they used for the standard spending assessments means that an authority would not get a full grant if people worked outside the area seeking to raise money. The Government made some small argument of the fact that the authority would not need as many food inspectors or as much street cleaning if people left the area. If people go into an area the authority can raise money from car parking facilities and other provisions but the authority loses out if people leave the area. An authority will also lose out if it contains an intermix of middle class and working class areas——

Mr. Quentin Davies: Is the hon. Gentleman's obvious desire to filibuster his hon. Friend's motion a reflection of a confession of hopelessness at the possibility of developing a coherent argument in favour of the motion from a Labour point of view?

Mr. Barnes: When I saw that the motion had been tabled in the name of my hon. Friend I said, "Eureka" because I have been trying for some considerable time to get a debate in the House—an Adjournment debate, or come lucky in the ballot—so that I could discuss the democratic and constitutional implications of the operation of the poll tax. I have taken this opportunity to do that. You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have held me in line.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. That is quite clearly what is causing some resentment in the House. I must remind the hon. Gentleman again that no matter how strong his desire to debate those matters, that is not what the motion is about.

I hope that he will address himself to the motion that is before the House, and not one that he might have hoped was before the House.

Mr. Barnes: I am addressing the motion before the House, although my arguments could have been produced in favour of a different motion. The motion before us talks about the poll tax, the taxation burden and the consequences and evils of that Government legislation and I was seeking to conclude——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. There are a number of other nouns in the motion but that does not mean that it would be in order to have a full debate on any of those other nouns. I hope very much that the hon. Gentleman will respond to the sense of the motion—the burden of taxation. Otherwise I hope that he will resume his seat and let another hon. Member speak.

Mr. Barnes: As I said in conclusion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was making a point about the unfairness of the burden that has been placed on local authorities and poll tax payers in particular areas because of the Government's peculiar policy and their manipulation of the operation of standard spending assessments. That has led to a silly formula for catching particular areas. My district authority in Derbyshire, North-East, in representations to the Minister, showed the inequities of the system being used, which means that if the areas are a mix of rural and urban areas——

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Does my hon. Friend agree that it would be absurd to talk about the weight of taxation on the people of Britain without discussing the poll tax, which is the newest and most onerous burden on our people——

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Lady is not encouraging her hon. Friend to defy my ruling, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will observe what I have said to him.

Mr. Barnes: I was making the point that if people live in an area which is both rural and urban they lose out on the grant for sparsity of population and on a grant for concentration of population. That has affected my constituency in particular, and Derbyshire county council, which is one of the poll tax capped authorities.

Also, if an area is mixed in class terms, with middle and working-class areas, working-class people in the area will suffer. Because of that mix they will miss out on various grants. On the social deprivation index there will not be a sufficient percentage of the socially deprived from working-class areas to get a grant. For example, in my constituency the eastern section is identical to that of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), yet the grant provision to the district council in Bolsover is more generous. The people in the eastern section of my

constituency—and others in the western section—cannot get such a reduction. Any formula that is based on such odd priorities, and which hits specific types of authority, especially those in the north of England, is terribly biased and unjust, and that is relevant to the nature of the evils of the tax that I am discussing.

I could go on to develop discussions about some of the other elements mentioned in the motion, such as the unfairness of value added tax, but, given that there is certain impatience with my contribution—not from Opposition Members but from Mr. Deputy Speaker—I feel that I have made my point about the economic, social, constitutional and democratic consequences of what we are discussing. It is time that the House faced up to those democratic and constitutional considerations because the poll tax is the most monstrous measure of taxation—among many of the other horrors that my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield has talked about and that we could go on about—that the Government have introduced. The poll tax is by far the worst. I hope that Conservative Members who are now ready to jump up will tell us that they have seen the light and that we will get rid of this obnoxious measure.

11.37 am

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): I congratulate the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) on coming top in the ballot and on the subject that he has chosen for debate. A debate on taxation, especially when initiated by the Opposition, is always riveting.

Today marks the 75th birthday of my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Sir J. Ridsdale) and the 64th birthday of my right hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow). It is a matter of regret to the House, as it is to the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, that neither my hon. Friend nor my right hon. Friend can be here to contribute to the debate. They are in their constituencies toiling away on their constituents' behalf.

I want to draw the attention of the House to crucial words in the motion of the hon. Member for Makerfield—"the growing burden of less fair taxes".

I begin by saying something that will not be welcome to my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary. The most unfair tax invented is that which is called inflation. That tax has been unauthorised by Parliament.

Mr. McCartney: What about income tax?

Mr. Gow: I am coming to that. I hope that I shall carry the hon. Gentleman with me during part of my speech. I shall give way to him, or to one or more of his hon. Friends, if they wish to intervene.

Only Governments can cause inflation; only Governments can cure it. There has been one occasion in your lifetime, Mr. Deputy Speaker—you will remember it well, since you were a member of the Administration at the time—when the recorded rate of inflation was 26·9 per cent. Today it is 9 per cent. plus, and probably rising. In my opinion, the Labour party was not responsible for, although it was in office, the rise in the rate of inflation to 26·9 per cent. It was my belief at the time, and it remains my belief today, that responsibility for that inflation figure of 26·9 per cent. rests with my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) and my noble Friend Lord Barber. They were, respectively, the First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer during the period of between 18 months and two years which preceded that inflation figure, which occurred in 1975-76.

Since I blame my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup and my noble friend Lord Barber for causing that inflation, I also assert that the cause of the inflation in 1975-76 was an increase in the growth of money supply at a rate far greater than the increase in the supply of goods and services. Inflation of 9 per cent. plus—and possibly 9 per cent. rising—is the direct cause and the inevitable consequence of the fact that somewhere between 18 months and two years ago the growth of money supply was much greater than the rate of growth in the supply of goods and services.

If the hon. Gentleman's motion that he has enabled us to debate today has rendered any service, it is, I hope, this: that when the Financial Secretary replies to the debate he will renew the Treasury's acknowledgment that excessive monetary growth is the inevitable cause of inflation. The inflation from which we are suffering today, and which is in prospect, could have been avoided. I remind my hon. Friend of the manifesto upon which he and I, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and my right hon. Friend the First Lord of the Treasury fought the June 1983 election. For the sake of accuracy, I have the precise words:

"In the next Parliament, we shall endeavour to bring inflation lower still. Our ultimate goal should be a society with stable prices."

In 1987—almost exactly three years ago to the day—my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary went before the people of St. Albans and my right hon. Friend the First Lord of the Treasury went before the people of Finchley and said, according to the election manifesto:

"The Conservative Government will continue to put the conquest of inflation as our first objective."

It was not the second or third objective; it was the first. The manifesto continued:

"We will not be content until we have stable prices, with inflation eradicated altogether."

I want my hon. Friend to repeat in your hearing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and in the hearing of the mover of the motion that the Government remain committed to achieving stable prices, with inflation eradicated altogether.

We are allowed to remind ourselves about that commitment this morning because we are talking about fair taxes. The most unfair tax of all is inflation. It is a major source of envy, jealousy and malice; it is the unauthorised robber of those who have saved; it is a major disincentive to investment—notably to investment from overseas. Inflation is also the principle parent of unemployment. If we are talking about fairness—it was the hon. Member for Makerfield who chose to put the word "fair" on the Order Paper—let us have from the Financial Secretary his reaffirmation of the commitment to end the unfairness of inflation.

I shall now cease to carry the Opposition with me and will cause no further embarrassment to my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary. We can be certain that the words which my hon. Friend intends to utter will satisfy me. He and I hold identical views on this matter. I know that I shall be wholly reassured by what he will say. I do not blame him for what happened; he was not at the Treasury at the time. A fascinating exercise for the House, and relevant when a motion such as this is moved by a Labour Back-Bencher, is to ask what would be the consequences of electing a Labour Government.

[Mr. Gow]

My hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) told the House that the previous Labour Government borrowed when they dared not tax and printed what they could not borrow. He was right. The motion contains a reference to levels of taxation and spending, but we can be absolutely certain that if there were ever another Labour Govemnent there would be a massive increase in spending and borrowing. A Labour Government would be unable to borrow enough to finance their extra spending, so the printing presses would inevitably be set to work.

One consequence of the policies that my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench have followed, with my warm approval—to repay debt instead of to borrow—is an overall increase in the proportion of gross domestic product that is used to finance public expenditure. My hon. Friend will correct me if I am wrong, but in present day money the borrowing of the previous Labour Government was about £40 billion.

Mr. Allen: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gow: Of course, I shall give way. I gave an undertaking to give way and I shall fulfil that undertaking.

Mr. Allen: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his typical generosity. It may be prudent to borrow less, given the policy that the Government have pursued in raising interest rates. If one borrows less one has less to repay. The hon. Gentleman will accept the logic of that. Will he go on to the next stage and acept that the Government are no longer repaying debts but are starting to borrow again. Public sector borrowing is increasing. Should not the hon. Gentleman look a little further than the straightforward monetarism he has put forward so far?

Mr. Gow: I should not have given way to the hon. Gentleman because he is not correct. For the past three years and for the present financial year we shall be repaying debt. There is no longer any justification in drinking a White Lady to achieve a reduction in the public sector borrowing requirement. The consequence of drinking a White Lady today is to increase public sector debt repayment, and that is a very good thing.

The present policy of high interest rates will result in the abatement of inflation. I am pleased that we are debating this motion today because the inevitable consequence of a future Labour Government will be higher taxes and, using the words of the motion, the terrible unfairness of higher inflation and the rising unemployment which will follow any inflationary policy.

11.51 am

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): I am grateful for the opportunity to follow the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow). I have followed him on many occasions in debates on Northern Ireland, and it is a pleasant and refreshing change to follow him in this debate. May I say how much I welcomed his refreshing and objective remarks. He said that the inflation figure of 26·9 per cent. was a direct consequence of the policy followed by the former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) and the former Chancellor, Lord Barber. I recall 17 December 1973—the date is engraved on my heart—when the credit expansion that had been introduced by Lord Barber came to an end. The vast credit expansion that led to an unprecedented boom in property and property development ended when the Government imposed restrictions, and, because inflation takes two years to work its way through the system, there was massive inflation in 1975.

Mr. Allen: Although the scenario that the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) painted was most seductive, I warn my hon. Friend not to go too far in saying that inflation is entirely the product of national Governments printing money. There are many other important factors, notably the actions pursued by other national Governments. While I do not wish to detract from my hon. Friend's attack on the hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) and Lord Barber, we should remember the shock of oil price increases which fed into the high inflation figures under the last Labour Government.

Mr. Bell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for anticipating my speech. The next point in my notes refers to the oil price rise, but my hon. Friend is certainly right to refer to the actions of other governments. I remember Mr. Giscard D'Estaing, who became President of France, saying that the American war in Vietnam led to the exporting of inflation from the United States into Europe. My hon. Friend is perfectly right to say that there is a clear connection between our inflation and what happens in other countries.

The great oil price shock in 1973 after the Yom Kippur war, when the price of a barrel of oil rose from $3 to $11, was mirrored in 1979 when the price of oil quadrupled, leading to an inflation rate of 21 per cent. in 1981 under a Conservative Government.

One of the reasons why there has been a reasonably stable inflation rate in the 1980s, leading to stability in Governments throughout the western world, has been the fact that the prices of oil and other raw materials have been relatively stable. On the back of that stability we have been able to maintain the inflation rate reasonably well.

To add to the refreshing comments of the hon. Member for Eastbourne, of course, there have been other factors since 1974. Lord Barnett wrote an excellent book called "Inside the Treasury" and I hope that my hon. Friends on the Labour Front Bench and the Treasury Ministers have read it with great interest and understand the absolute importance of keeping a strong control on expenditure commitments that may appear in a manifesto.

I disagree with the final remarks of the hon. Member for Eastbourne when he prophetically referred to what he envisages as the consequences of a future Labour Government. There is not the slightest prospect of a future Labour Government borrowing to the extent that the hon. Gentleman suggested. At the very first Labour party conference I attended in 1976, Lord Callaghan, the then Prime Minister, said that the days when Governments could borrow or spend their way out of an economic crisis were over. The Labour party has learnt those lessons and there is not the slightest prospect of a future Labour Government entering the money markets to the extent that the hon. Member for Eastbourne has suggested and borrowing money. Nor is there the prospect that a future Labour Government would print money. All Governments throughout the western world understand perfectly well what happens when Governments resort to

the printing press. The hon. Gentleman was perspicacious in his references to the consequences of inflation. Inflation destroys savings and the principle that one should even try to save or put money aside, as it is eaten away by inflation. So inflation will be a paramount consideration to any future Labour Government and in my modest capacity as a Back-Bench spokesman, I give a commitment that a future Labour Government will not borrow to the extent that the hon. Gentleman suggests and certainly will not print money.

Mr. Allen: I hope that I do not anticipate my hon. Friend's remarks once again, but I invite him to allude to current Government borrowing, particularly in the past three months. The hon. Member for Eastbourne appeared not to be aware of the situation. Having been a net repayer of debt, with a general election approaching we are now starting to borrow again in ever greater amounts.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Once again the debate is moving away from the motion before the House. It is a debate not about the general economic financial situation but about the burden of taxation.

Mr. Bell: The hon. Member for Eastbourne said that inflation was the greatest tax that we could impose on future generations and he was perfectly right.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman was being invited to discuss the potential borrowing of a future Labour Government.

Mr. Bell: The hon. Member for Eastbourne was warned when he said that the Government are not borrowing money that the Government have dipped into the money markets of late to balance their books, but I shall leave it at that.

The motion mentions

"savage cuts in the quality of public services".

We all remember the early 1980s when the Government used the prices of gas, electricity and water, which were all nationalised industries, as indirect taxation. They increased the charges for those services and telecommunications. That was indirect taxation used by the Government to pave the way for reductions in the rate of income tax.

One of the great tragedies of the past 10 years under this Government and under the United States Government is the view that has crept into our thinking that high taxation is wrong. I believed in 1970 that it was a great pity that Mr. Wilson as he then was lost the election. He tried to persuade the people that they should accept high taxation for the high standard of services that could be rendered. Unfortunately, that battle was lost in 1970. In the 1980s, we have lost ground still further, because the concept in the public's mind is that they do not really want increased taxation. I am aware that, if people are interviewed for an opinion poll, they may say that they would like increased taxation and would like to pay more for better services, but that is not the reality, as is shown in this country and elsewhere.

Many years ago, Hugh Gaitskell said that the Labour party was the party of high taxation, but we have evolved over the years. To use the words of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), Labour is now the party of fair taxation. We fully accept the concepts of fair taxation, of value for money and of paying our way in the world. We will not return to a situation when the Government tried to persuade the British public that they should pay high taxes. We fully accept that the country wants a fair taxation system and value for money.

The hon. Member for Eastbourne talked about the inflation rate. One of the great tragedies of our time in economic terms was the Chancellor's decision to reduce the highest income tax rate from 60 to 40 per cent. Financially, that could be said to be a small change, but overall it gave a signal to the public that the good times were here and that we could spend more than we were earning. It resulted in a boom which created our present financial difficulties. We all remember the shift under the Conservative Government from direct taxation to indirect taxation. We will never forget the shameless promise in 1979 not to increase VAT, and then it doubled. That sleight of hand created a framework for lower direct taxes.

When referring to previous Labour Governments and taxation rates we should remember that under a Labour Government the taxation rate was 25 per cent. for those on lower incomes. We have not moved far from the view of taxation in those years. Taxation levels overall under the Conservative Government are higher than they were under a Labour Government and the consequences are felt by every family. Families know the taxation burden that they face and they will not accept the sleight of hand so often shown by those on the Treasury Bench.

12.3 pm

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): We have heard some interesting speeches, including a thoughtful one by the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell). My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) said that inflation was the killer and the primary tax. One point that distinguishes this country from others in western Europe is that mortgage interest in not included in the retail prices index in those countries. Inflation in the United Kingdom might be assumed to be 9·5 per cent. but it is really about 2 per cent. below that. That is a long call from the 26·9 per cent. to which my hon. Friend referred.

Mr. McCartney: Surely the hon. Gentleman is not suggesting that the crippling monthly repayments that most people are suffering under the Government should be removed from the RPI calculation. Whether it is in or out of that calculation, there is still growing debt among mortgagors and still a problem of trying to meet growing demands. People are having great difficulty meeting the higher burdens imposed by the Government's economic policies.

Sir Trevor Skeet: The hon. Gentleman makes his point. We are now in Europe and I suggest that we should conform to European standards. As mortgage interest is not included there—and the hon. Gentleman is very much in favour of that sort of thing—perhaps my proposal should be investigated.

The Conservatives have a good taxation record. They have been cutting borrowing, paying off debt—£25 billion in three years—and saving £2·5 billion in interest payments, which could provide for the running of 150 hospitals for a considerable time. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) referred to the prospects of some of our prosperous companies such as Glaxo and made a point which I think he will regret in future. It is a big exporter for the United Kingdom and a

[Sir Trevor Skeet]

producer of many new drugs. It is a wealth creator, not a wealth consumer. There have been three Labour Governments since the war, for terms of roughly four to six years. They were the wealth destroyers. The Labour party came into office after the Conservative Government had built up wealth, and then the Labour Government distributed it. There have been 13 years of previous Conservative Governments, the present Government have been in office for 10 years, and the term is likely to be extended further. Wealth creation can be brought about only by having appropriate incentives, not denigrating some of our best companies.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for letting the wealth destroyer intervene. It is not my intention to denigrate Glaxo as a company. Of course, it plays an important part in the British economy. I said nothing that could have possibly been taken by anyone to be a denigration of Glaxo. I raised the issue of the desirability, or the necessity, of paying its chairman £500,000 a year. That seems a lot of money, even for someone as hard working as the chairman.

Sir Trevor Skeet: The hon. Gentleman has made his point, and we shall read it carefully in *Hansard*. It is a matter of interpretation, and that is not my interpretation.

If the Labour party ever assumed the leadership of this country, high salaries would be the first things to be removed, and some of the people who have been producing this country's wealth would be affected. We have seen some of Labour's party pieces and it has suggested its programme. We must take account of the taxation required to meet those commitments which has been assessed at roughly 33p in the pound, instead of the current 25p in the pound. We would return to the conditions of previous years.

To take one item, it will be extraordinarily expensive to deal with the roof tax. Is the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East prepared to tell us how he will operate that tax? It is a property tax plus a local income tax. I assume that the hon. Gentleman would prefer to leave that answer to some other occasion, and perhaps that might be a good idea.

Mr. McCartney: May I take the hon. Gentleman back to the issue of Glaxo? My point was not the pay that that gentleman receives but the fact that he had a 51 per cent. increase. If workers at Glaxo or elsewhere asked for even one quarter of that, Conservative Members would be the first to be up on their hind legs attacking the consequences of inflationary wage demands.

I remind the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) that during Prime Minister's Question Time a few weeks ago the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) prompted the Prime Minister on the issue of high wage rises feeding through from the boardroom downwards. In response, the Prime Minister distanced herself from that and attacked the way in which company chairmen and others were giving themselves huge pay rises of between 50 and 110 per cent. because they gave the wrong impression and the wrong image to the rest of the workers in the economy.

Sir Trevor Skeet: Yes, I can see envy entering the matter again. It seems that people must not be allowed to earn too much, even though they pay a substantial element of tax. Envy creeps out from every corner and it eventually formulates policy. We do not want to drive company chairmen from the United Kingdom. If they can earn more in Europe or the United States, they will go there and we will be the poorer.

Mr. Allen: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Trevor Skeet: No, I want to make only a comparatively short speech.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) referred to the community charge. On that, I must depart from the generality of feeling in the House which is totally in support of the Government. There are nearly 11·2 million married women in the United Kingdom, of whom 3·9 million have no paid employment and 3·4 million are termed economically inactive. Of them, 2·4 million state that their main reason for staying at home is to look after their husbands and families. That is a very creditable motive with which many people would agree. If we argue that those non-earning married women should have a considerable rebate on their community charge payments—as much as 80 per cent.—it will cost the Government a great deal of money. However, I do not argue for an exemption because I think that it would be unqualified. The community charge is a good tax—if it may be termed a tax. Formerly only 18 million people paid rates out of a total of 36 million. Therefore, the community charge is a good tax in the sense that its coverage is wide and accountability is there for all to see.

I predict that in future the Labour party will throw aside its roof tax and adopt the existing tax on the statute book. However, the community charge has some ragged edges. Although reform may be expensive for the Government—in one scenario the cost would be £1·8 billion—the problem could be abated because many people involved are eligible to receive rebates anyway and it would be unfair to suggest that if women had considerable investment income or had large capital funds of their own, they would qualify for rebate. Of course, they would have to pay the full sum.

Many people are caught between Scylla and Charybdis. Some have minuscule earnings. On the one hand they face the rapacity of local authorities, which seem to have little desire to control expenditure, and on the other an absurd structure for local government which accommodates too many tiers of administration. We must overcome that problem. I am trying to help the Government, who are going to review the community charge shortly. I hope that they will consider that problem very carefully.

Why do I argue that the non-working married woman should qualify for rebates under the community charge? Those women are now taxed separately under section 32 of the Finance Act 1988. If they are separately taxed, the burden should be distributed equally between the parties and they should be accountable for their share. If they are accountable for their share, but cannot pay it, some compensation must be paid in the form of a rebate. I suggest that they should pay only 20 per cent. of the charge unless they fall within exceptional circumstances.

Another of my arguments why non-working women should qualify for rebates is that many wives do not wish to approach their husbands for money because relations in

marriage as a consequence might prove difficult. We must recognise that 35 per cent. of marriages break down. Some are very shaky and asking for money is a real problem.

Another argument is that those women have no legal right to a specific part of their husband's salary. He may be irritated at having to bear the legal responsibility for her charge. That is very significant and the further one travels north, the more powerful that point becomes until it is very powerful in Scotland. In England we are trying to be a little more reasonable.

Another argument is that most married women have no savings. Of a total of 13 million women, 65 per cent. have under £3,000 in savings, 30 per cent. have between £3,000 and £10,000 and 5 per cent. have more. It is obvious that most married women have no money from which to pay the charge except through the leverage from their husband and the law that stands behind him. It is unreasonable not to modify the law in that regard.

Another argument relates to the difficult position of widows and single parents who look after children. It might be helpful to the Goverment, as they are reviewing the community charge, if I offer a few suggestions. I am certain that the review will be successful and when it is successful people will say to themselves, "Why didn't we think of that?"

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East made one good point. Under the Rating (Disabled Persons) Act 1978 all severely handicapped persons were entitled to a rates rebate. However, under the community charge, relief is allowed only for the mentally disabled. I see no reason for that restriction. Perhaps the relief could be extended.

Mr. McCartney: The hon. Gentleman has made an important point. I have two disabled constituents who, as a consequence of the poll tax, must find just under £800, but they cannot meet the bill. The legislation failed to take account of amendments pursued by hon. Members on both sides of the House from the Front and Back Benches. The Government were intransigent and refused to look after that group of severely disabled people.

Sir Trevor Skeet: Yes, the Government have a problem. They must weigh up what concessions are practicable in the circumstances. One would not want to thrust on the Government an impossible condition. However, that anomaly could be rectified.

We must also consider the second house anomaly. That provision is so absurd that people are trying to find a way round it. I received a letter from my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities in response to a constituent's letter which I believe was very helpful. My hon. Friend the Minister wrote:

> "If it appears that local authorities have not made sufficient use of their discretion we will certainly consider whether we ought to alter the provisions relating to this type of property. Indeed the Department have just issued a Press Release which expresses our concern that in some cases local authorities appear not to have made responsible use of their discretion."

I can see the light at the end of the tunnel. I believe that the Government will come up with some good ideas. The responsibility lies not with the Government, but with the interpretation of the principles laid down by local authorities. Unfortunately, they assess a person as earning over 20 per cent. on his or her investment when it is quite impossible to reach that figure. Most people's investments return about 10 per cent. If they are to be charged a high amount against the possibility of securing a rebate, one is taking away with one hand what one is granting with the other.

Mr. McCartney: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Trevor Skeet: No. I should proceed because other hon. Members wish to speak. I want to make some important points as the review will be held shortly.

Overall, the Government have been very successful. The proportion of GDP taken by income tax fell from 11·1 per cent. in 1978-79 to an estimated 9·5 per cent. in 1989-90, which is a reduction of 14 per cent. The spending power of higher salaries is important. The Labour Government were in favour of a displacement of direct taxation in favour of indirect taxation. That is precisely what has been happening in the United Kingdom. One has control over one's indirect taxation because one need not buy a certain product. One may be tempted—

Mr. Allen: What about gas and electricity?

Sir Trevor Skeet: Gas and electricity are not subject to VAT, and nor is the food that we buy. We have kept them on a zero rate, and it is right that we should maintain that policy. I agree that most foods are not subject to VAT, but one or two are. The system is fair and it should be extended.

It was said that many people are concerned about the amount of money that could be provided to build health services. The Labour Government spent about £8 billion in their last year. We now spend about £30 billion on health services, which is a big contribution. It is absurd to suggest that we are conducting an unfair system of taxation.

There are one or two ways in which I should like modifications to be made, particularly to help people who are in a fix. Let us bring about a change. Let us make a fair system even fairer. Let us bear in mind that inflation is the biggest tax for the investor and for the man who lives in a small house anywhere in the United Kingdom. After all, we are one nation, but we are looking at the problem from only two sides.

12.22 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Peter Lilley): I am glad to have the opportunity to congratulate the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) on securing the debate, on choosing the subject, and on a first-rate speech that built an impressive edifice on a slender foundation. Unfortunately, his speech was undermined by his descent into personal attacks on able and successful people, including right hon. and hon. Members. None the less, the hon. Gentleman's speech served a useful purpose—I am sure that he will learn his lesson because he clearly lost the support of the House when he descended into personal attacks—because he illustrated that the mainspring of Labour tax policy is not a desire for fairness, but envy, and not a desire to help, but malice. That point was made clear and it is always helpful for it to be pointed out to the House and to the nation. I shall refer to the constructive aspects of the hon. Gentleman's contribution and his motion after I have dealt with some of the points that were made by other hon. Members.

We heard a sparkling contribution from my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris),

[Mr. Peter Lilley]

followed by an epic contribution by the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes), who gave us the benefit of his historical learning and sense. He conveyed the historical sense so grippingly at times that I thought it was delivered in what computer experts call real time. I shall refer his contribution to my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities, who will doubtless study it closely.

As always, my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) made a riveting contribution. It particularly riveted me because it was clearly directed at me. I was challenged to say whether I agree with his analysis and conclusions. I do. I accept that the Government are responsible for securing and maintaining a stable currency. I confirm that we shall not be satisfied until we have again secured a stable currency. There is no point in trying to blame others for the problems, and we do not do so. We recognise that we must get inflation down, and we are taking hard and difficult measures to do that. The electorate will, with the benefit of hindsight, recognise that when given a choice of a party that is prepared to admit that, following the stock market slump in 1987, it unnecessarily and excessively relaxed monetary policy. They were egged on at the time by the Opposition to do even more. We do not blame anyone else. We recognise that that must be undone and that a painful period of high interest rates is therefore necessary. There is no shirking that.

The hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) made an extremely sensible speech, which explains why he is still on the Opposition Back Benches. Although he affirmed that Labour Front-Bench Members have been converted, they have not, and that is why he is still unacceptable on their Front Bench.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) tellingly highlighted the importance of wealth creation rather than wealth consumption. His detailed and interesting points about the community charge will be studied closely by my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities.

The motion is a great compliment and an encouragement to the Government. The greatest compliment that an opposition party can pay to the Government is to judge them not by its own socialist standards but by Conservative standards. That is what the motion does. It judges us on our success in reducing the burden of taxation rather than, as one might expect from a socialist party, on how much we have raised public expenditure. It judges us on our success in improving the quality of public services rather than the normal Labour obsession with quantity. It judges our success in improving work incentives and reducing marginal rates and marginal effective rates rather than, as the Labour party normally does, in raising the social wage.

The motion is a compliment to us, but it is also encouraging for us because history shows that whenever a party abandons faith in its own standards and values and tries to ape those of its opponents, it loses the next general election. There is an absolute correlation on that front, ranging from the time the post-war Labour Government lost faith in socialism, went in for a bonfire of controls and thereby ushered in a Conservative Government. The electorate said, "If they are both offering the same thing, let's have the real McCoy, not the ersatz variety. Let's have the people who believe in it."

Mr. McCartney *rose*——

Mr. Lilley: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment when I have amplified my point. Let us remember that when Gaitskell tried to move the Labour party to Butskellism he simply heralded, in 1959, the greatest Conservative victory for many years. Sadly, when the Conservative Government lost faith in their own values and started trying to push those of their opponents, favouring high spending, indicative planning and so on, they heralded the return of a Labour Government in 1963. Similarly, after the U-turn in the mid-1970s, we heralded the return of a Labour Government. Whenever a party abandons faith in its own distinctive philosophy and tries to ape that of its opponents, it does not work electorally. Nevertheless, we welcome it now.

Mr. McCartney: The Conservative party seems to be making a schizophrenic attack on me. The hon. Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) said that my mask had slipped and that I was a tooth and claw socialist. The Minister is now attacking me for aping the Government's Thatcherite policies. Who am I to believe? Am I to believe the hon. Member for Epping Forest or the Minister's analysis of my speech?

Mr. Lilley: Apes have teeth and claws. My point is that the Opposition have not changed. Their underlying policies and attitudes remain the same, but they are trying to pretend to the elctorate that they have changed. However, the electorate will see through the Labour party, as it always does on such occasions. If the Opposition made a genuine change, as has the Labour party in New Zealand, and clearly and distinctly abandoned the socialism of their past, moving full-bloodedly towards the policies that the Labour party in New Zealand has espoused, they might be as successful as the Labour party in New Zealand. But we have not yet seen that sort of transformation in the Labour party here.

I shall consider each of the main points of the motion in turn. I refer first to the allegation that taxation has risen to a higher level under this Government than under the previous Government. The fiscal burden imposed on a nation is measured by the share of its resources that is spent and taken by the Government. We are talking about the percentage of GDP that is spent by the Government because every £1 of public expenditure has to be financed from taxation either now or, if it its deferred by borrowing, later.

Mr. Allen *rose*——

Mr. Lilley: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman although I am told that it is improper for me to give way to those who are committing sartorial solecisms.

Mr. Allen: The hon. Gentleman may yet regret giving way for another reason. I refer him to a parliamentary answer given by the Financial Secretary—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Lilley: That is me.

Mr. Allen: I am sorry, I meant the Economic Secretary. I had forgotten that the hon. Member for St. Albans (Mr. Lilley) had been promoted. I congratulate him on his very important position.

When asked on 8 June 1990 about the total tax burden as a percentage of GDP—I am glad that the Financial Secretary accepts that that is an important indicator—the Economic Secretary replied that in 1979 it was 28·3 per cent. of GDP and that in 1988 it was 30·4 per cent. Therefore, according to his hon. Friend's definition, the burden has increased.

Mr. Lilley: I forgive the hon. Gentleman for forgetting who I am, even if he is not forgiven for forgetting his coat.

The total tax burden imposed on an economy is what is spent—whether that amount is financed currently by taxation or whether the taxation is deferred by borrowing. Under the last Labour Government, spending reached a peak of 48·5 per cent. of GDP and averaged about 44 per cent. Under this Government, spending has been reduced to 39 per cent. of GDP. The reason why the hon. Gentleman can quote figures purporting to show that the proportion of tax has risen is simply that for a period the Labour Government borrowed instead of taxing. They deferred taxation, but the bill had to be picked up eventually. Indeed, it had to be picked up with interest. We have to finance not merely the honest expenditure that we are incurring, but the interest on the debt that we inherited from the Labour Government.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my hon. Friend agree that those who criticise the current level of taxation should state which programme of expenditure they would cut to reduce it?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The very charge made by the motion—that the Government have imposed a higher tax burden than our Labour predecessor—is not merely invalid when analysed properly, but is bound to boomerang on the Labour party, just as my hon. Friend pointed out, because it invites three obvious questions. If the Labour party really believes that the tax burden under the Government is too high, why did it vote against each cut in income tax? It would be perfectly reasonable for Opposition Members to vote against increases in taxes. If they believe that the total burden is too high it seems perverse to vote against reductions in taxes. Opposition Members voted against every single reduction in tax that we introduced.

Secondly, if Opposition Members believe that the total burden of tax is too high, why in the Labour party's recently issued programme did it not promise a reduction in taxation? It is clear that through all the subterfuge there is no promise to reduce taxation. Indeed, the shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer has admitted that his changes will not be neutral but will raise taxation.

Thirdly, if the Labour party believes that the total burden of tax is too high, why does it keep promising extra spending which must mean extra taxation either now or, if put off for a little by borrowing, in due course?

Mr. Allen: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Lilley: No. If the hon. Gentleman wants to intervene again he really must get dressed.

The second major claim in the motion is that for most families lower income tax has been offset by higher VAT and local government taxes. That ignores the fact that the most sizeable increase in the tax yield under this Government has come from corporation tax, rather than from taxes on households. In the last year of the previous Labour Government, corporation tax was just over 2 per cent. In the last year for which we have figures, corporation tax was almost 4 per cent. of GDP. That was the result of our reducing the rate of corporation tax to one of the lowest in any European or major international country. We have spread it more equably across the revenues of companies by spreading allowances over the economic life of projects. Thereby we increased the tax yield as the profitability of British industry increased, which was welcome to us all. The tax burden rose—to the extent that it did—because it was necessary to pay for the expenditure previously financed by borrowing. It rose not least as a result of improved profitability and, therefore, the improved tax take from British industry.

In any case, the reduction in income tax has been significant. If we had simply maintained the rates of tax that we inherited from Labour and increased the allowances only by inflation, the average household on average earnings would pay more than £1,000 extra in income tax every year—more than £20 a week. That would have been the result of not changing the income tax system that we inherited from Labour. That more than offsets any rise in VAT.

The clear evidence that everyone has in their pockets is that take-home pay has risen rapidly under this Government and outstrips taxation. That is in real terms after taking account of price rises, including rises in indirect taxation. The real take-home pay of the average man on average earnings with a couple of children has risen during the past decade by 32 per cent. after all taxes. Under the Labour Government the same chap had an increase in living standards of just 0·5 per cent.

Even those on lower incomes, about whom Opposition Members rightly expressed anxiety, have seen only a 25 per cent. increase in their real take-home pay. But under the Labour Government their pay increased by only 4 per cent. I believe that on the whole they would much rather see their incomes rise by six times as much as they did under Labour than worry about whether others are doing better still.

The third point of the hon. Member for Makerfield was that national insurance contributions have been, as he says, "cynically used as a tax". That is a real own goal. After all, the Labour Government imposed the national insurance surcharge on employers' contributions—the notorious tax on jobs. We had to abolish that at considerable cost to the Revenue, but we did so because of the damage that it did to jobs. What is more, one of the few clear and certain aspects of the Labour party's latest policy document is that it proposes to abolish the upper earnings limit on national insurance contributions. That means that all earnings above £8,200 will be taxed at 9 per cent. It will be a cynical tax, not an extension of the charge and contribution system, because the extra money will not earn extra benefits or extra SERP entitlements in due course. The hon. Gentleman is shooting himself in the foot.

The hon. Gentleman's final point was that a large number of workers face combined tax and benefit withdrawal rates of 70 per cent. or more. Any generous and well-targeted benefit system will inevitably involve some disincentive effect of this sort. We have gone to great lengths to reduce the extent of the problem. The social security review had as a key feature the relating of benefits to income net rather than gross of tax. That ensured that nobody would pay a combined tax and withdrawal rate of more than 100 per cent. The reductions in the basic rate of income tax have contributed to reducing the problem. The

[Mr. Lilley]

higher thresholds have taken about 1 million people out of tax and last year's reforms reduced the effective marginal rate below 70 per cent. for tens of thousands of people.

In all his points the hon. Gentleman has failed to make his case, but has instead pointed to the great inadequacies of the Labour party's position. He has highlighted Labour's tax proposals and I know that my hon. Friends will do so further, so I shall restrict my remarks to the one which Labour Members imagine will be the least unpopular, which is to raise the top rate of tax to 50 per cent,. or 59 per cent. including the surcharge. They think that that will affect only 1·7 million people and their families, but I do not believe that it will prove so harmless. The rest of the country is not foolish. They recognise that in the long term onerous taxes on the better off do not yield much in revenue. If anything, they do great damage to the economy as a whole.

Mr. Allen: Will the Financial Secretary give way?

Mr. Lilley: No. As we have reduced penal top rates of tax, revenues from the better off have increased both in absolute terms and as a proportion of the total income tax revenue raised. There is every reason to suppose that if the process were reversed, the consequences for the yield would also be reversed in due course.

Mr. Allen: Will the Minister accept a question on that point?

Mr. Lilley: No. I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the remarks of Tiberius Caesar, who responded to a number of governors who wanted him to introduce burdensome taxes with these words, which I shall translate for the benefit of Labour Members:

"It is the role of a good shepherd to shear his sheep, not to flay him."

It is important to have taxes that raise revenue rather than simply cause pain. The whole range of other tax measures that are implicit in the Labour party document would do little more than cause pain. They would be inadequate to finance the heavy extra commitments to expenditure which the Labour party clearly has up its sleeves. They would bring great problems to the country and return us to the ruinous position that we faced at the end of the 1970s.

12.43 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): It is interesting that the Financial Secretary follows Tiberius Caesar, because he was followed by Caligula. *[Laughter.]* Perhaps this is a memorable occasion after all, because the Financial Secretary has made a good joke and I congratulate him on it. It is the second that I have heard him make in my three years dealing with Treasury affairs.

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman has heard the first several times.

Mr. Brown: That is true, but the hon. Gentleman has had to listen to the recycling of my jokes, including the one about the Lilley of Lacuna.

Mr. Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): Ho, ho, not again.

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman is checking how many times it has been used.

Before taking up the main theme of the motion and the debate I shall deal with the reference of the Financial Secretary to the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) who said that he agreed with the points made by Lord Barnett in his book "Inside the Treasury". My hon. Friend was speaking authoritatively. Lord Barnett's book contains insights that any Labour Treasury team would be foolish to ignore. The Financial Secretary is wrong to assume that my hon. Friend's views on economic affairs, which are entirely orthodox from the Labour party's point of view, are keeping him from the Opposition Front bench. The Financial Secretary should know that my hon. Friend resigned from the Opposition Front Bench to deal with a particular issue in his constituency. If the Financial Secretary followed current affairs more closely he would not have made that comment.

My hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) reminded us of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's interview on Channel 4 news on 22 May. As my hon. Friend said, the Chancellor said that he would deal with taxation in Budgets and that he had told the people what the Government's taxation policy was. He added:

"They know prefectly well what our policy is."

That was the right hon. Gentleman's statement on the Government's taxation policy. I am sure that the entire House will be grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield for tabling the motion and enabling us to discuss the Government's taxation policy rather more fully than would seem to be the Chancellor of the Exchequer's wish. My hon. Friend has generously given the Government a chance to play at home following their away game defeat on Monday 14 May.

The motion invites us to discuss the taxation policy of the party that has governed our country for the past 10 years. Given that the Conservative party has formed the Government for the past 10 years, it is surely reasonable to look for a common theme, some consistency, some sense of direction and some coherence in taxation matters. It is not always easy, as my hon. Friend has already said, to reconcile what the Government have said with what they have done. They claim to be committed to reducing taxation. That is a claim which the Conservatives make time and again, but they have done nothing of the sort. The overall tax burden has increased substantially as a proportion of gross domestic product since the Conservatives came into office.

When the Government talk about their success in reducing taxation, they mean income taxation. Even then, they are talking about income tax rather than income tax and national insurance. I thought that the Financial Secretary was pushing his luck when he said that the national insurance surcharge was a tax on jobs. In effect, he said, "Look what the wicked Labour Government did. The Conservative Government abolished the surcharge." Did unemployment decrease when the surcharge was abolished? The answer is that it did not. The Conservative party won the 1979 general election with the slogan, "Labour isn't working". The implication of the slogan was that the Conservative party would reduce unemployment. As we all know, unemployment tripled before it started to decrease. It is still higher than when the Conservative Government came into office.

The Conservative party claim to be committed eventually to achieving a basic rate of income tax of 20p in

the pound. That commitment and claim are worth exploring. During the debate on the Labour party's taxation policy, which was initiated by the hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) on 14 May, there was much boasting about the commitment and claim. That did not prevent the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley)—I think that he spoke on the Government's side—saying:

"The 20p level remains the Government's stated policy. However, that level would be wrong in present circumstances."

He added:

"if tax rates were reduced to 20 per cent. now, that might encourage another spending spree just when we are trying to restrict retail sales."

It should be noted that the hon. Gentleman referred to "another spending spree". He went on to say, more out of loyalty than intellectual conviction;

"However, 20p remains a Government priority."—[*Official Report*, 14 May 1990; Vol. 172, c. 624.]

That the hon. Gentleman felt it necessary to make that latter point, having just explained why it was wrong, says a lot about the present struggle being waged in the Conservative party between pragmatism and ideology. The hon. Gentleman managed to personify that struggle. He received support for his reluctance to endorse the practicality of a 20 per cent. income tax rate from no less an authoritative figure than the Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

During Treasury Question Time yesterday I did my best to support and defend the Chief Secretary, but I got no thanks from the Chancellor for my pains. He said that I was being cheeky, but that was a little hard on someone who was trying to defend his right hon. Friend.

On 13 May on the BBC programme "On the Record" the Chief Secretary said:

"The prospect of tax cuts at the moment does not look very good. These things are always uncertain but we have very little room for manoeuvre."

That is what we heard after 10 years of a Government whose stated objective was to reduce the overall burden of taxation; after 10 years of a Government who have ritually boasted about their prudent management of the economy. After 10 year of working towards that policy they are now reduced to saying that there is "little room for manoeuvre" and one must ask what type of organisation they could be trusted to manage.

The central point of the debate is that the reduction in direct taxation has been accompanied by a substantial increase in indirect taxation, which now accounts for just over half of all the revenues the Government have available to them. The position is exacerbated by the use of national insurance payments as a concealed method of levying income tax. The Financial Secretary's attempt at denying that was wholly unconvincing. Reductions in the basic rate of income tax have been partially offset by rises in the rate of national insurance.

Mr. Quentin Davies: Does the hon. Gentleman deny that the current Labour party policy to remove the upper ceiling on national insurance contributions, if by some mischance it came to power, would mean precisely what he is now accusing the Government of—using the national insurance system as a covert means of taxation?

Mr. Brown: When we form the Government after the next general election the hon. Gentleman will be positively encouraged to flee the country—voluntarily of course. The hon. Gentleman's explanation of our policy is absolutely correct. It is our intention to remove the ceiling on national insurance payments so that those who earn more than £18,000 a year will continue to pay national insurance. The hon. Gentleman should remember that we shall also introduce a banded system of taxation so it does not necessarily mean that the whole amount of the national insurance contribution would bite at that immediate level. We believe that it is unfair that a single person who earns £36,000 a year is paying national insurance—effectively income tax—only on half of that amount whereas a couple earning £18,000 each pay national insurance on the full amount. There is no justice in that, because the couple's expenses would be greater than those of the single person. There is an essential injustice there.

Mr. Lilley: Is the hon. Gentleman denying the basic principle of independent taxation?

Mr. Brown: That is a bit rich coming from a Government who have made married couples joint and severally liable for their poll tax and focused the married couple's allowance on the man rather than on either the man or the woman. Of course I am not denying the important principle of independent taxation. The Labour party advocated it well before the Government got round to attempting to do something about the broader parameters of it.

I understand, however, why Conservative Members are so fascinated about our tax policies. They had their chance on 14 May, when they tabled a motion to debate our tax policies, and on that occasion we had a robust knockabout discussion. It is now our turn. The Government are playing at home today and the Labour party is playing away.

Sir Trevor Skeet: Has the hon. Gentleman noticed that only three Members are present on the Labour Benches?

Mr. Brown: In that case, the Labour party is playing well away.

The Government would have a more credible case on national insurance increases had the extra money that has been raised been ploughed back into the provision of social services and welfare benefits. Had that occurred, they might have sustained a moral case, but they have done nothing of the sort. They have used national insurance as a covert method of raising income tax.

That brings me to the main charge that must be levied against the Government's taxation policies, and it was rightly levied by my hon. Friends the Members for Makerfield and for Derbyshire, North-east (Mr. Barnes). It is that the Government's approach to taxation is essentially socially divisive, heavily biased in favour of the well off and against the generality of the population.

Indeed, when Conservatives talk about middle-income families they really mean the top 15 per cent. of taxpayers. They talk of people on incomes of £20,000 to £30,000 as if somehow they are the middle range. In fact, 85 per cent. of all taxpayers have incomes of under £20,000 a year. About 70 per cent. of all full-time employees and close on 85 per cent. of all women working full-time earn £14,000 a year or less. So inevitably the least well off have been hurt the most by the shift from direct to indirect taxation and by the accompanying cut in child benefit.

[Mr. Brown]

A family of four on half average earnings has seen its tax burden more than treble since the Conservatives came to office. At the other end of the scale, the Government reduced the top rate of income tax in the 1988 Budget for the wealthiest in society. Now, only one taxpayer in 25 pays at the higher rate of income tax.

I will make a deal with the hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies), a deal from which we could both benefit. I will accompany him to the constituencies in which he would wish to speak and I will mispronounce the names of the chairmen of Glaxo and other great British companies—those chairmen with foreign names—and will do that as though it were some sort of incitement to class warfare, if the hon. Gentleman will come with me to the constituencies that I would wish to visit. There, he may defend in the most upper-class accent he can possibly affect the earnings in British industry of top executives of £500,000 a year or more. If he will stand on a platform and say, as he just said, "What is wrong with someone who is in a position to do so doubling his pay to £500,000? People should be free to do that."——

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): They earn it.

Mr. Brown: They decide whether or not they earn it. If the hon. Gentleman will come with me to the hustings at the next general election and defend that course of action in a strident, upper-class accent, I will accompany him to his meetings.

Mr. Quentin Davies: I shall be delighted to debate in any context with the hon. Gentleman, but he has completely missed the thrust of my remarks. It is not sensible for politicians, Governments or bureaucrats to try to second guess what should be the appropriate pay scale for anyone, and anybody who attempts to go down that road is a victim of a fatal illusion. If I had more time for this intervention, I could cite a list of countries as long as my arm in which economic systems based on that principle have ended in economic disaster.

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman is presumably assuming that the rest of the country believes it to be fair and equitable that a person who is in a position to do so —because he is in charge—should double his salary from a clearly unworthy £250,000 to £500,000 a year. There are many people in society on much lower incomes than that who would like to be in a position to take such action.

I hear what the hon. Gentleman says about it being wrong to decide what earnings should be in particular industries. I hope that when he is eventually promoted to the Government Front Bench, he will be put in charge of public sector pay, and has a chance to apply those philosophies. I think that he will get on well with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury when he is doing so.

The Conservative policy for top rate taxpayers seems to favour the very rich, rather than those whom the Conservatives prefer to describe as on middle incomes. In their pathetically and, appropriately enough, out-of-date Conservative research department document entitled, "Labour and the Economy—the Essential Guide" they charge:

"the freezing of the rate for higher rate tax progressively drags more people into Labour's new, higher rate tax bands."

Since we have not said that we would do anything of the sort, that seems a rather unfair charge, even by Conservative standards, to levy against the Labour party.

The document is dated May 1990, which was after the Chancellor's Budget statement, and after publication of the Finance Bill. Clearly a lot of infighting is going on among the Conservatives. I am sure that the inclusion of that paragraph in the Conservatives' "Summer Heat On Labour" document is not intended as a real criticism of the Labour party, because it could not be sustained. We have not said that we would do anything of the sort. What is intended is a veiled attack on the present Chancellor of the Exchequer, who froze the higher rate of tax threshold and, in so doing, has dragged an extra 300,000 people into the higher rate tax band. The Conservative research department clearly condemns him for doing so. One wonders which of the Chancellor's rivals for the future leadership of the Conservative party put the research department up to that. Who is in charge of the Conservative research department now? Who is in charge of Conservative central office?

Mr. Robert G. Hughes (Harrow, West): The hon. Gentleman is right to complain in the terms that he does, and he has an excellent opportunity to put matters right. Surely to sustain the spending promised up and down the country by Labour spokesmen on housing, social security, education and training and to pay for more civil servants, the Labour party would either have to set the higher rate tax band so far down the income scale that many people would be included in it or raise the basic level of taxation so dramatically that people would be robbed blind. If that is untrue, he must tell us where the money will come from. Otherwise, he cannot complain about assertions made in Conservative research department documents.

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman has clearly come to the wrong game. He should have come to the debate on 14 May. As we are not pressed for time, I will give him a full answer. He is absolutely right when he says that I hope to have a chance to put matters right in the near future. Just after the next general election I hope that, along with my hon. Friends, I shall be in a position to address those points.

Mr. Dickens: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will not be chosen.

Mr. Brown: Yes, there is always that possibility. However, I hope to be able to address those points when I am in government and not in opposition.

The hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) seems to be a little jealous that our shadow Chief Secretary is more effective among her colleagues than the Chief Secretary to the Treasury is among his.

Let me spell out again, probably for the third time in as many debates, exactly what the Labour party stance is. Taxation will play a full part in the overall management of the economy. Public expenditure, that the country can afford, and no more, will play its full part in the overall management of the economy. Public expenditure commitments will have to take their place in the queue, behind the two that have been agreed, as is well known —pensioners and child benefit. Other commitments will have to bid in exactly the same way as happens under the Government. We are not in a position to forecast what a future Labour Chancellor's taxation levels would be. I

remind the Financial Secretary to the Treasury of what the deputy leader of the Conservative party said yesterday about making statements on what the future standard rate of income tax will be. To a packed House he said:

"In all the questions asked by shadow spokesmen over many years that one beats all records for stupidity."—[*Official Report*, 7 June 1990; Vol. 173, c. 783.]

I shall not be as unkind to the hon. Gentleman as the deputy Prime Minister was to my hon. Friend the deputy Leader of the Opposition, my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), but I hope that he understands that that point was made firmly and well by someone on his own side whom I am sure he respects.

Mr. John Marshall: The deputy leader of the Conservative party is none other than Lord Whitelaw. The hon. Gentleman's description of the deputy Prime Minister was inexact. I am afraid that his economic forecasting is equally inexact.

Mr. Brown: The problem is that on the the Conservative side they change hats and titles so often—and they even change Houses. I apologise for not having got the Leader of the House's title exactly right, but I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for intervening to correct me. I am sure that it was done in a helpful, friendly spirit and as a matter of good will.

The Conservative party's "Summer Heat on Labour" document, which is about the way our party would manage the economy, has caused much harmless amusement on our side. I welcome it, if only for that reason. The Conservative party defends its reduction of the rate for top rate taxpayers by saying that it has generated more revenue. Even Conservative Members would not argue that that trend will continue indefinitely, but it is right to explore a little further the argument about optimum rates of taxation. By "optimum" I mean setting a rate to derive the maximum possible revenue from it. We have to ask ourselves how the Conservative party has succeeded in reducing the top rate of income tax while managing to get more money. The reason the tax take from a reduced top rate has increased is because those who have to pay tax at the higher rate have been paying themselves more money. That does not apply across the board, but it applies at the upper end.

I suspect that prior to the reduction in the top rate of income tax, executives took their reward package in perks rather than in income; then it became more tax efficient to take it in income. Last month a survey conducted by *The Guardian*, involving 100 of Britain's top companies, found that the highest-paid executives had awarded themselves pay increases of, on average, 33 per cent. That is four times the British inflation figure and over three times greater than pay rises. Average earnings of top-paid executives amounted to £380,000 per annum.

Reference has been made in the debate to the 51 per cent. increase that the chairman of Glaxo awarded himself. Even the Prime Minister has condemned executives who have awarded themselves excessively high pay rises. I agree with her and support her remarks. I am sorry that the hon. Members for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris), for Stamford and Spalding and for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) and even the Prime Minister's own Financial Secretary do not support her concern about the affront that she knows many ordinary people feel when they see such excessive and selfish takings by people at the very top. The Prime Minister was right to condemn excessive greed. I am sorry, and I am sure that she will be sorry, that her expression of concern has not been echoed by her Treasury Ministers.

Would the Financial Secretary and Conservative Members who have taken part in the debate consider any rate of pay to be too much, or do they think that powerful executives should be entitled to continue looting as long as they can get away with it?

I thought that the Financial Secretary would have referred to the role of the taxation system in the broader management of the economy. After 10 years in government, what have the Conservative party's taxation policies done for our inflation rate, our current interest rate, the trade deficit or economic growth which is forecast at 1 per cent., putting us at the bottom of the growth league? What have they done for investment? If the Conservative party's taxation policies have been successful after 10 years in government why are the Government forecasting negative growth in the 1990s? What have Conservative taxation policies done for unemployment, which is set to rise?

The Conservative party takes the view that if rich people have more of their own money to spend they will spend it and create jobs for the poor. But if unemployment is rising, that does not seem to be happening. What are we to make of that ultimate admission of ignorance about taxation policy—the poll tax? The House does not have to give a verdict on that, because the electorate will do so.

The Financial Secretary confidently asserted that the Labour party was trying to adopt Tory policies, that the electorate would see through that and would vote for the real thing rather than for some shoddy imitation. The Labour party is not trying to adopt Conservative party policies. Indeed, when we have won the next general election, it will give us great pleasure to discard them, and I assure the House that the poll tax will be one of the first things to go—*[Interruption.]*—It is no good Conservative Members shouting from a sedentary position.

Mr. Lilley: Since the hon. Gentleman is critical of the level of taxation currently levied by the Government, is it the objective of the Labour party to reduce the burden of taxation?

Mr. Brown: My criticisms are directed at the Conservative Government because they pledged to reduce the overall burden of taxation, yet after 10 years in government they have made it rise rather than go down. The Labour party does not make such a promise. We believe in an adequate level of taxation commensurate with the needs of the economy, but when Ministers state that the Labour party will increase taxation it should at least occur to them that they have already done that. Taxation has risen to its present level because of Conservative policies, so why should Conservative Ministers assume that a Labour Government would increase taxation? They would not necessarily do so.

Mr. Dickens *rose*——

Mr. John Marshall *rose*——

Mr. Brown: I shall not give way as I wish to conclude on an uncontroversial note and to soothe Conservative Members by reading to them from *The Daily Telegraph* today, which has something to tell them——

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): We can read it in the Tea Room.

Mr. Brown: I assure the hon. Gentleman that I read very nicely. I always thought that Conservative Members liked *The Daily Telegraph* and that it was their house magazine. *The Daily Telegraph* tells Conservatives about the popularity of their taxation policies over the past 10 years. Under the headline:

"Tory hopes dashed as Labour stretches lead"

it states:

"The findings of the latest Gallup surveys for *The Daily Telegraph* flatly contradict the widespread belief among Conservatives that the party's fortunes are beginning to improve following the short-lived furore over the poll tax."

The polling is interesting. I like the bit that states:

"Unhappiness with the Government's record combines with growing confidence in Labour to create what is now a widespread sense that voters and their families would be better off—or at least no worse off—under a Labour Government than they are now".

I think that the figures might help to answer the question that the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) wanted to ask. Forty two per cent. thought that they would be better off under Labour; 28 per cent. thought that they would be worse off; 26 per cent. thought that there would be no difference; and 5 per cent. did not know. The article stated:

"The results of this last question are crucial for the Conservatives.

Everyone who thinks that he or she is likely to be better off under a Labour Government is likely to vote Labour. Everyone who thinks that he or she would at any rate be no worse off is, in an important sense, available to the Labour party."

The electorate is judging us aright, even if the Conservative party, for whatever reasons, is not.

1.15 pm

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): If the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) is right about that Gallup poll and if there is to be a Labour Government, people will soon find that history repeats itself. As my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary said, one need only look at the record. When people are in the awesome privacy of the ballot box—not just answering a question asked by someone who comes up to them in the street—and are voting for a Government, rather than voting in a by-election or local council election, they say to themselves, "Am I better off now than I was four or eight years ago?" History tells us, and my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary reminded us, that the take-home pay of people on average earnings—not the super-rich—has increased by 33 per cent. under the Conservative Government. That is the question that people will ask themselves in the ballot box in the general election next June or the following June. That is why I am confident that, whatever an opinion poll in *The Daily Telegraph* may say, we shall win the next general election.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) on choosing this subject. As my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary said, it is usually a mistake in politics to pick as the ground for a fight the one on which the Opposition must like to fight battles. I had hoped that the hon. Gentleman would initiate a debate on the national health service or social security, perhaps, but he talked about the taxation burden. He was not so much throwing stones in the proverbial glass house as rolling boulders about. The hon. Gentleman should look at the record of previous Labour Governments and hark back to what the Conservative Government faced when they came into power in 1979. As my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) and others said, there was a yawning £40 billion gap between income and expenditure. We are not ashamed to admit that the only way any responsible company, individual or Government could deal with that shortfall was to increase taxation. Of course, we had to increase taxation. We had made a commitment to cut direct taxation and increase enterprise, and we fulfilled it. The only course available to us was to increase indirect taxation, and we did that.

Mr. McCartney: Why was that not in the Conservative manifesto?

Mr. Leigh: It is no good the hon. Gentleman shouting at me from a sedentary position. I am prepared to give way if he wants to intervene.

Mr. McCartney: If that was the attitude before the general election, why did not the Conservative party include in its 1979 election manifesto, in the section on taxation, the fact that its first act on coming into power would be to increase VAT from 8 per cent. to 15 per cent.?

Mr. Dickens: It was a switch from direct to indirect taxation.

Mr. Leigh: As my hon. Friend the Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) reminds us from a sedentary position, we made it clear that we intended to shift the burden of taxation from direct to indirect taxation, which is what we have done.

I shall do a deal with Labour Members. I shall forgive them everything that they do in their first two years in office, if they get in—because, as they would say, they are clearing up the mess left behind by the previous Government—and I shall not judge them on the level of taxation and inflation. I shall judge them only on their final three years in office. I will judge them on that if they are fair to me and judge this Government on their record since 1981.

Mr. John Marshall: Does not my hon. Friend realise that if the Labour party ever came to office and tried to spend their £19·5 billion, within two years they would not be the Government of this country? The Government once again would be the International Monetary Fund.

Mr. Leigh: That is exactly what happened then and it will happen again.

It is interesting that Labour's document "Meet the Challenge, Make the Change", or whatever it is called now, makes a number of commitments. Opposition Members have reinforced a commitment today that the next Labour Government will definitely increase pensions and child benefit. That is their commitment on one side of the scales. On the other side they are prepared only to give a commitment to make modest increases in taxation—to increase the top rate to 50 per cent. and to give tax relief on mortgages only at the basic rate. Those are modest increases which could not possibly alarm anyone.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) said, the key point is that unfortunately 95 per cent. of taxation comes from the 24 million people who pay the base rate. I have done a little research, and I must confess that I had some help from the Conservative

research department. But as the research is based entirely on the spoken and written words of Labour party spokesmen, I assume that it is right.

My research showed that the Leader of the Opposition said in "This Week, Next Week" on ITV on 5 June 1988 with regard to Labour's tax plans:

"The great middle band, the huge majority, lets call them 25p people . . . would be no worse off".

The hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng), the junior Opposition Treasury spokesman, claimed on Sky TV on 9 November 1989:

"We don't want to put taxes up."

All that is in line with what we read in Labour party policy documents. However, just as we do not read about what Labour will replace the poll tax with, we do not read what they will do with the base rate. I am prepared to give way to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East who has listened carefully to me, if he will give a commitment to the House not to increase the base rate.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: I am happy to explain our taxation policies yet again. As the hon. Gentleman is undoubtedly perfectly well aware, and as even the Conservative research department probably understands by now, the Labour party is committed to introducing a banded system which means that there will be more tax bands than at present. The rates will be different. It is our intention to have a lower rate of 20 per cent.—or possibly lower—to ensure that the low paid can retain more of their income. We have said that we will put taxes up and we have said specifically which ones would rise.

We thought that the handout to the top rate taxpayers in the 1988 Budget was wrong and we intend to increase the rate for top rate payers from 40 per cent. to 50 per cent. All that is perfectly clear. If the hon. Gentleman believes that taking off the national insurance ceiling means that the rate would, in truth, be 59 per cent.—when Labour talks about national insurance it is income tax, but it is not when Conservatives are arguing their case—that would still bring the top rate of taxation back to one percentage point below what is was for most of the term of this Government.

Mr. Leigh: That was a very long intervention, but it did not tell us very much. How long is a piece of rope? How far can we stretch a piece of elastic? The hon. Gentleman spoke vaguely about banding. I will give way to him again if he can tell me who will benefit from the lower rate of 20 per cent. given the large numbers involved. How much revenue will be raised given the relatively fewer numbers paying higher rates of income tax? How much revenue will be raised by increasing their taxation to 50 per cent.? What about all the evidence that shows that as taxation is increased for higher income earners so the kind of revenue return for which one would hope does not occur.

Mr. Dickens: That raises an interesting point. Under the previous Labour Government we had a high rate of taxation of about 98 per cent. People were able to keep only 2p in the pound on their investment, which meant that our entrepreneurs, our risk takers, our job providers, our inventors and our professional people went overseas or offshore with their money, and that contributed to the wealth of other nations. If they could have stayed here under a sensible tax regime, they would have benefited our country, as they are now doing. Inward investment is pouring into the United Kingdom as a step into Europe, so our taxation policies have proved to be working. The previous Labour Goverment were an absolute shambles. We cannot increase all our benefits and all the things that the Opposition seek to increase if we do not create wealth. We must create wealth first and then we can do other things.

Mr. Leigh: I am grateful to my hon. Friend.

Two avenues are open to the Labour party. There is the Mondale route and the Dukakis route. The Mondale route is the honest route, which says, "I am on the left. I believe that spending on social services and public health provision should be increased. I accept what was in the 1987 manifesto, therefore I must put the base rate at 29 per cent." Hon. Members will remember that Walter Mondale lost rather badly. People do not like to be told that their taxes will be put up, but it is honest. The other route is the Dukakis route, which the Labour party is now following. That says, "We will not admit that we are going to put up taxes. We will not tell people what we will replace the poll tax with."

Mr. Nicholas Brown: We are going to replace the poll tax.

Mr. Leigh: The hon. Gentleman's party will replace the poll tax, but, as Mr. Bush asked, "Where's the beef?" That is what we want to know. Let us have some facts and figures. It is no good saying, "We do not know. We are not in Government. We do not know what the situation is." The Opposition are following the Dukakis route. They are not being honest. They will prove as unsuccessful as Dukakis did. When it comes to the ballot box, people on the other side of the fence will say, "That is fudge and mudge."

Mr. McCartney: Can you tell us what the position with the poll tax will be by the end of July, in its form, size and recommendations?

Mr. Leigh: The hon. Gentleman addressed that question to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Perhaps you might be able to tell him. I shall give an answer from my point of view.

It would be very dangerous if we were to give a general subvention to the poll tax from the income tax payer. Given the inefficiencies of local government, I fear that the money would be swallowed up in an enormous bottomless pit. That is my personal view—I cannot speak for the Government—and I am grateful to be given the opportunity to express it. I do not think that there should be an enormous subvention on the community charge from the income tax payer. The great value of the poll tax is that it has focused public attention on local government finances to an extent that we have never witnessed before.

The debate is valuable. I hope that my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury is listening carefully. He made some general points about policy and where it leads us. We all accept that we have not got taxes down as much as we would like. I dredged up an interesting statistic which, funnily enough, was not in the research department briefing—*[Interruption.]* I do not know why it was not in the briefing. In 1979, the average tax bill, as a proportion of income, direct and indirect, on the average taxpayer was 27·8 per cent.; now it is 26 per cent. after nearly 12 years of Conservative Government. That is not good enough. We must do much better than that if we are to be true to what we believe in.

[Mr. Leigh]

If the statistics are right—I believe that they are—they prove one thing: at the next general election we should not consider a compromise or a consolidated manifesto, we should consider a radical manifesto. We should carry on our policies of tax-cutting and getting to grips with inflation. I shall give my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary a few ideas. Unless we are prepared to be radical, people will say, "We have a tired Government. They have run out of steam. Where are their new ideas?" They know that there are no new ideas among the Opposition. They know that they are a milk-and-water version of Thatcherism. If the Conservative Government can come forward with a radical manifesto and show that we are barely started on this route, there is no reason why we should not win the next general election.

Here are some ideas. Let us continue the privatisation programme. Let us privatise the freight, parcels and inter-city side of British Rail. Let us privatise the Nottinghamshire coalfields. Let us look at all the services that can be contracted out in the health service and in local government. Competitive tendering has been successful, but there is widespread evidence of cheating and of direct labour organisations being allowed to fiddle the books. Not enough progress is being made. Where there has been real competitive tendering, in councils such as Westminster and Wandsworth, real savings have been made.

However, we should think not only in terms of competitive tendering, but of local authorities being compelled to go for the lowest price. There should be a much closer audit of what they do to ensure that there is fair play and to avoid what happened in Humberside recently when the council—Labour, of course—deliberately fiddled the competitive tendering of its school cleaning services. It said that anybody submitting a tender had to do so for the whole authority. That was too vast a proposition and gave an obvious benefit to the direct labour organisation. When—surprise, surprise—the direct labour organisation got the job, it was because it had given a price that it could not fulfil. It refused to make anybody redundant or to improve working practices. The whole thing is going bust. That is a Labour-controlled council.

We could make much more progress in terms of competitive tendering and privatisation. We could also look again at tax cuts. I shall give my hon. Friend some of my personal ideas on what we could do before I conclude.

The most serious problem facing this country is the poverty and unemployment trap. We must address how we, as a Conservative Government, will create the sort of responsible society in which we believe. One route to which I am sympathetic and which the Government have announced that they intend to follow is to reduce the basic rate of income tax to 20p in the pound. That is a laudable aim, which I fully accept. The difficulty with that premise is that one comes up against the enormously powerful lobbies that are arguing for increased spending, especially on the national health service, social security and education. They are all laudable aims but they make it difficult to cut taxation.

Therefore, we must encourage more and more ordinary people—I am not talking about people on higher incomes, but about those on average earnings—to make more provision for their own pensions and for private health insurance and to contribute towards their children's education.

These are radical ideas. I do not necessarily suggest that there should be straight tax reliefs for people who put their money into private health insurance or into educating their children because I know that the Treasury will immediately say, "What about the problems of dead weight? You are giving money to people who already do those things."

However, we could consider some of the following ideas. If we had a standard rate of national income tax —just one rate with no banding—and if we abolished all thresholds and allowances, at a stroke we would get rid of most of the problems of the poverty and unemployment trap. If we then returned to people a basic cash payment that would be portable between investing in children's education, or topping up that investment, on investing in private health care, or in renting or buying one's home——

Mr. Dickens: What about a voucher system.

Mr. Leigh: My hon. Friend has suggested a voucher system, but I am thinking of something more sophisticated. These ideas are radical, but I believe that they are ideas to which this Government, who have proved themselves to be radical and prepared to cut through many of the shibboleths of ordinary party political thinking since the second world war, should now be addressing their mind.

But enough of that—let us get down to the basics for today. The hon. Member for Makerfield is to be congratulated. He has reminded the House that if we had a Labour Government everybody—ordinary people—would be much worse off.

1.33 pm

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): As you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the second motion on the Order Paper is in my name. However, as this motion is of great importance to the House, it is unlikely that my motion will be reached. I understand that, because I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) has done us all—and the country—a singluar service in drawing attention to the tax burden under the Conservative Government and to what has happened to the low-paid workers who are paying 70 per cent. or more.

The rag, tag and bobtail of Conservative Members who have spoken have made ill-founded and unjustified remarks that have been short of the mark. They did not talk about the burden of taxation but addressed their minds to direct taxation. One can understand why. What is the hon. Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) interested in? It is no wonder that he is interested in direct taxation with all the other jobs that he has. The register of interests lists Steve Norris Limited, Steve Norris (Weston) Limited and until February 1990 he was with GTI Technology Group Ltd. At the same time he resigned from Glentronic (1988) Ltd. With all those additional jobs I, too, would be interested in direct taxation.

The hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) also spoke. He was interested in Floyd Oil Participations until November 1988 but he is still an adviser to Cater Allen Holdings plc as well as being a solicitor. Again, one can understand that he has some interest in direct taxation.

Then there is the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet). He is a consultant to Associated Portland Cement Manufacturers. Again, he has an interest in direct taxation.

Then we have the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) who has just spoken. He is always interested in justice. Of course, in the Standing Committee that considered the poll tax legislation he tabled a clause to imprison people who fail to pay the poll tax. He is the right person to talk about justice. If he wishes to challenge that I shall sit down.

Mr. Leigh: The hon. Gentleman did not remind the House that that amendment was proposed by the Rating and Valuation Society. I tabled it on its behalf. He also did not tell the House that exactly the same provision existed under the old rating system. What the Bill, which has now become an Act, encompasses is no different from what was in the previous legislation.

Mr. Hoyle: I am quite interested in that intervention. The hon. Gentleman says that he is interested in poor people who cannot pay the poll tax going to prison.

Mr. John Marshall: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hoyle: No. I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman. One of my hon. Friends has been sitting here patiently, waiting to speak so I do not wish to take too long.

The hon. Member for Epping Forest talked in the usual way that we hear from the Conservative side about Labour's policies of envy. He should have talked about our policies of justice. What we have on the Conservative side are the policies of greed. Conservative Members worry only about those who are at the top, those who are well able to look after themselves, the well-heeled people who occupy the bull ring. It would not be so bad if industrial bosses were successful in their jobs; if, indeed, our economy was booming in the way that the Japanese and German economies are booming. It would not be so bad if they could justify the high salaries that they repeatedly give themselves. But such salaries are completely unjustified. There are one or two exceptions in British industry, but by and large we are failing and falling miserably behind many of our competitors. Yet, time after time we hear people try to justify the obscene salaries that are paid to people in industry. Indeed, we heard it today.

The hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North intervened during a discussion about the salary of the chairman of Glaxo, to say that the NHS benefited from the work of Glaxo. Does not the national health service also depend on the efforts of doctors, nurses, medical and scientific laboratory officers, speech therapists and all the others who work in the health service? Many are suffering immensely from the Government's indirect taxation policies. They are the ones who should be encouraged because it is on them, not those on high salaries such as the chairman of Glaxo, that the health service depends. Yet under this Government their burden has increased.

No wonder Tory Members do not want to talk about the overall tax burden. It is easy for them to talk about how they have reduced the direct tax burden, particularly for those at the top. It is a different story when we consider those on medium-range and low salaries, and especially the effect on them of one of the Government's first actions in raising VAT from 8 to 15 per cent. That was followed up by the destruction of a third of manufacturing industry, which threw many people out of work. Tory Members talk about a recovery in industry, but it starts from a much lower level than existed in 1979.

When Tory Members speak it always surprises me how often they refer back to what happened under the Labour Government in 1979. They have been in power for 11 years, yet I have never heard them mention the benefits of North sea oil revenues.

Mr. McCartney: Eighty billion.

Mr. Hoyle: That is right. I am indebted to my hon. Friend for mentioning the figure. What has happened to the money? It has not been used to strengthen industry or to bring justice to the great mass of taxpayers and those who cannot afford to pay taxes. It has been frittered away. This morning we have heard only about those at the top of the tree.

The real problems facing Tory Members is that they have been rumbled by the electorate. A bleak future faces many of them. Indeed, some who have spoken today may not be with us for much longer, so we shall not have the benefit of their pearls of wisdom. Just when they thought that things were settling down, their cover was once again blown. *The Daily Telegraph* opinion poll this morning shows the Conservatives falling below a figure which I did not think they could fall below. Their popularity rating is now below 30 per cent., which brings increasing misery to them.

The rumblings in the Conservative party against the Prime Minister and the dissatisfaction with her leadership will undoubtedly continue to grow. She is undoubtedly due to be denounced as the ex-Chancellor of the Exchequer was. Yet he was supposed to be the saviour. He masterminded the huge tax bonanza—the giveaway—to those who did not need it, which caused all the problems that the country now faces. He caused the wave of imports which are being sucked in against an industrial base which cannot match that of our competitors. We are getting into an economic mess.

The good news is that we shall not have to put up with the Government for much longer. Nor, indeed, will ordinary people have to suffer the unfair direct and indirect taxation burden that has been imposed on them. I look forward to the day when my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) is helping to frame a Labour Government's first Budget, which will be based on social justice. It will consider the whole country, not just those at the top. It will bring justice to all British people. May that day come sooner, rather than later.

1.45 pm

Mr. Matthew Carrington (Fulham): The hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) is to be congratulated on having opened something of a hornets' nest by tabling and introducing the motion. I think that the result is not that which he intended. We have had revealed to us the "wonderful" politics of envy of Labour Members. Those politics have so permeated their economic thinking over the years that they have become blinkered. I suspect that the public were starting to think that perhaps those politics had disappeared in the Labour party's policy reviews. It is

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now clear that they constitute a veneer or a coating of whitewash over the old and real beliefs of the Labour party.

Labour Members seem to believe that those who earn lots of money form an evil section in our society and do not contribute to society. We have heard time and again today tirades against the highly paid. I have no brief——

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Carrington: I shall finish my sentence and then I shall certainly give way.

I have no brief for the chairman of Glaxo and how much he should or should not be paid. But I know that for the creation of wealth it is necessary that wealth should start at the top and spread downwards. Without the enterprise, initiative and skill of people who run companies, there would be no wealth to spread downwards.

Does the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) wish to intervene now?

Mr. Nicholas Brown: No.

Mr. Carrington: I have obviously made my point perfectly satisfactorily already.

There is no question—I do not think that anyone would attempt to argue otherwise—but that the overall tax burden is at about the same level now as it was under the Labour Government. The Conservative Government have not been successful in reducing overall taxation as a percentage of gross domestic product. That is not satisfactory. As my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) said, the situation needs to be remedied and the next Conservative Government, following the general election, will need to consider it seriously. They will have to give urgent consideration to ways of reducing overall taxation as a percentage of the GDP. The position is unsatisfactory but we must look behind the numbers to see what has happened.

There has been radical change in the nature of the taxation stucture and of GDP. As my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary said, we must consider Government expenditure, not only the sum which is being raised in taxation. My hon. Friend said that the Labour Government reached a peak when 48 per cent. of GDP was being spent by that Administration. Spending is now about 38 per cent. of GDP. That has been reflected in the change in the Government's borrowing, which has fallen from about 58 per cent. of GDP in 1976-77 to about 28 per cent. That is a major achievement and one explanation why the tax burden is still sufficiently high. The tax burden now pays for Government expenditure. Indeed, because of debt repayment it provides more than what is needed to meet Government expenditure. We are moving out of the period during which there were major payments to meet Government debt, but that debt is now sufficiently low —a historically low level—to enable a major achievement to be claimed. If the reduction in debt is sustained, it will produce long-term benefits.

There has been a major change in the structure of taxation, with the shift from direct to indirect taxation. That is true especially of income tax. The burden of income tax and national insurance contributions was about 50·4 per cent. of the total tax take in 1978-79. In 1988-89 it was about 43·4 per cent. That is a major achievement. The Government have been able to reduce the amount of direct taxation from people's pay packets.

As my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary said, that has been balanced to some extent by the major increase in corporation tax that is being paid by companies. It has been balanced, too, by the increase in value added tax by about 7·1 per cent. over the same period. That in itself is nothing of which we should be ashamed. There is a strong economic and fiscal argument for having lower income tax and higher indirect taxes. Indirect taxes have an element of discretion, but I accept that not all direct taxes are discretionary. But there are major exemptions from VAT on food, children's clothing, books and so on. Although VAT is not necessarily a tax on luxury goods, it bears heavily on goods that are likely to be the least purchased by people who are less well off. Therefore, a reduction in income tax is a major benefit.

The principal reason for reducing income tax and national insurance contributions is the incentive that that gives to the health and growth of the economy. If people can spend what they earn they are much more likely to want to earn more so that they can spend it and exercise that choice. The proof of that can be seen in people's real take-home pay at all levels of income. My hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle said that during the previous Labour Government disposable income rose by 0·6 per cent., but during the Government's term of office—admittedly longer than that of the Labour Administration—those on average pay have seen their disposable income rise by about 34 per cent. Under the Labour Government people earning half the average income saw their disposable incomes rise by only 4·2 per cent. whereas under this Government it has increased by nearly 27 per cent. The wealth of the people has increased as they have benefited from our economic policies.

The dramatic change in our economy is a direct result of the shift away from direct taxation. That has provided the engine of growth in the economy, a boost in productivity and investment and the enormous incentive to industry to modernise to produce wealth.

Another reason why the tax burden has not been reduced is economic management. Frequently we hear the gibe that the Government are trying to run their economic policy with a one-club golf set—the interest rate policy. I believe that interest rate policy is and must be the major element in economic management. There is, nevertheless, a strong role for fiscal management.

In the past few years the Government have maintained a tight fiscal stance and have taken out of the economy money that they do not need to fund their expenditure. That has led to a dampening of demand, but it is an appropriate method by which to manage the economy and the Government would be foolish to ignore it. It is interesting that those who criticise the Government most for not reducing taxation are those who claim that the Government are using only one tool of economic management. At the very least the Government are using two tools of economic management—interest rates and, rightly, taxation.

That we need to continue a tight fiscal stance is unquestionable, but taxation in itself is not an easy method of economic management—it is a blunt instrument. Changes in taxation are not easily implemented and their

effects are not seen quickly. The Government have done what is needed; they have set up a solid framework of taxation with some certainty contained in clear guidelines on what will happen in the future. The target of reducing income tax from 25 per cent. to 20 per cent. is highly desirable and is one such certainty. That change has been well flagged and is expected to occur in the foreseeable future.

Taxation is a crude instrument of economic management, but it is right for the Government to use it. Although I should like the burden of taxation to be reduced from its present level, I do not believe that it is realistic to expect that at the moment. But I hope that it will happen in the near future.

The great fear is that if, by accident, the Labour party was elected at the next general election, we should witness a major increase in the burden of taxation which would have a bad effect on the economy and do much more harm than satisfy the aim of Labour Members to extract revenge against the well paid and those who have succeeded in creating wealth. An increase in taxation would undoubtedly choke off economic progress, hold back the resurgence of Britain as a major economic power and cause untold damage.

So my message to the Financial Secretary is this: we must ensure that we do not reduce our fiscal stance earlier than we can, given the prudent management of the economy. But we must bear in mind the fact that in the medium term we need to reduce the burden of taxation to more reasonable levels.

1.56 pm

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): The debate makes the central charge that the burden of taxation has increased under Conservative rule. That charge is stated clearly in the motion for all to see. Not one Conservative Member who has spoken has refuted that central thesis of the motion. In other words, my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) has won the argument hands down.

Nothing said today by Conservative Members can deny the fact that the overall burden of taxation is higher under this Government than it has been under any of their predecessors. One would have expected Conservative Members to produce some facts or figures at least to act as a fig leaf to protect the Government's record on taxation. They have not found it possible even to do that.

The only disagreement seems to be over the extent of the increase in the burden of taxation. The Economic Secretary to the Treasury told me in a parliamentary answer—I referred to this earlier—that, as a percentage of GDP, the percentage taken in tax had increased from 28·3 per cent. in 1979 to 30·4 per cent. in 1988.

It was not a question of the Economic Secretary stabbing his esteemed colleague the Financial Secretary in the back by giving those figures. The Government's Budget Red Book said that non-oil taxes were forecast to rise to 37 per cent. in 1990-91 compared with 34 per cent. in 1978-79. I could give other examples. For instance, Professor Atkinson's famous recent study said the increase would be from 34 to 38 per cent.

But let us not be blinded by statistics. It is important for Opposition Members to make it clear that the Government have performed an economic miracle. They have pulled the wool over the eyes of the British people by concentrating on the myth that a reduction in general taxation has the same effect overall as a reduction in income tax.

Income tax has undoubtedly been reduced, but virtually all indirect taxes have been increased. A classic example is that since the Conservatives came to power over 10 years ago, VAT has almost doubled. They have robbed Peter to pay Paul.

The overall tax burden has increased enormously, and I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield on choosing his words so precisely that the British people will know for sure, should they read the reports of this debate, that people are poorer under the Tories, especially in terms of the burden of taxation. The tax burden as a whole has increased and it is game set and match to my hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield.

The Financial Secretary made an attempt to ask some questions—rather lamely—which were demolished by my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) with his usual efficiency. The Financial Secretary did not wish me to intervene to answer his questions, so I took a careful note of them and will answer them now so that the record is clear. He asked which programmes Labour would cut. We are a long way away from the next Labour Government. It may be in a year, a little less, or a little longer, depending on what the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) does and what shenanigans occur within the Conservative party.

As a humble Back Bencher, let me give my view of which programmes will be cut. I think that the prime objective of the next Labour Government will be to secure economic growth. Therefore, no spending programme need necessarily be cut, but we shall certainly be looking to certain areas where prudent, planned growth in expenditure could take place on the basis of agreed priorities, which will obviously need extensive discussion by the future Labour Government's economic team.

As a caveat I must say that my view is that even the present Government are beginning to come round to consider cuts in our defence programme—the so-called peace dividend—as a result of the tremendous democratic explosion in eastern Europe and the personal efforts made by President Gorbachev to free the Soviet economy, thereby leading to less military expenditure. At the moment the Government are not seizing that opportunity, but I hope that my Front-Bench colleagues in a future Government will grasp that opportunity with both hands. Therefore, that is one opportunity for cuts.

Another opportunity will be to end the waste in so many areas, not merely economic waste, but the waste of lives. Money has been wasted in areas where it should not have been spent. One example is North sea oil revenue, which has already been referred to. It was stated earlier that people went abroad under the last Labour Government—the Mick Jaggers and all the rest, who are no doubt desparately important to the economic well-being of the country. Perhaps those people have stayed here under the Conservative Government. I do not know. Perhaps they have passed the cricket test and decided to stay at home. Certainly money has gone abroad in increasing amounts year after year. Investment abroad now exceeds investment in this country.

North sea oil revenue, which could have been such a profitable well, and could have been used for expenditure, development and investment to emphasise and rebuild

[Mr. Graham Allen]

training programmes and the education of young people, has been frittered away. There is no prospect of that money coming back.

We have heard the word "fairness" a number of times when talking about our spending programmes. That will be all-important. Whatever tax burden there may be under a Labour Government, be it a local tax, poll tax, roof tax or income tax at national level, the burden must be fairer. Certainly, the giveaway Budget of 1988, which was disowned so eloquently this morning by the Financial Secretary as the Budget that led to some of our current crises, which gave away money hand over fist to the richest while taking it away from some of the poorest, was one of the reasons why fairness has fallen flat on its face under the Government. I shall give way to the Minister, despite the fact that he refused to give way to me.

Mr. Lilley: I did give way to the hon. Gentleman, as he is well aware. He has just said that I said something which I did not refer to. Last time that he referred to the Financial Secretary he was referring to someone else. May I take it that he is again confused, as he so often is?

Mr. Allen: The Financial Secretary to the Treasury referred this morning to the failure by the previous Chancellor of the Exchequer, the right hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Lawson), to maintain monetary constraint. The right hon. Gentleman has gone on to richer pastures, earning six-figure sums in the City. That seems to be the reward under this Government for resigning or being sacked. His mistakes can now be openly admitted, even by Treasury spokesmen.

Mr. Lilley: I referred to the reduction in interest rates and to the easing of monetary policy after the stock market collapse in October 1987. I was a Minister then and share the responsibility. I was not seeking to blame anybody else. I did not mention the 1988 Budget, although the hon. Gentleman imagines that I did.

Mr. Allen: The Minister must live with his own conscience. He must decide whether to stay in his job and continue to accept responsibility for the failures of the past.

The Minister's second point related to tax levels. My hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East referred to yesterday's report in *Hansard* of the simple question that the deputy leader of the Labour party put to the deputy leader of the Conservative party in this House.

Mr. McCartney: The deputy Prime Minister.

Mr. Allen: Yes—no one more eminent than he.

Mr. McCartney: That is another well paid part-time job.

Mr. Allen: My right hon. Friend asked the deputy Prime Minister to outline what the Government's income tax level would be after their next Budget. Sadly, almost pathetically, the dead sheep fell into the elephant trap and made rather a fool of himself. One cannot predict absolutely precisely what that rate will be, even one year ahead, when one is in government. To seek, as poorly and lamely as the chairman of the Conservative party does, to pin down the shadow chancellor of the Exchequer on figures to be included in a Budget to be introduced under totally different economic and political circumstances in at least two years' time is more laughable than the laugh that was raised yesterday at the expense of the Lord President of the Council.

One of the failings of my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East is that he is too easy-going and generous towards top-rate taxpayers. My hon. Friend and his colleagues say that the top rate of tax for such people will be only 50 per cent. Until 18 months ago, this hard-hearted Conservative Government penalised those hard-working, well-rewarded and much-deserving top rate taxpayers to the extent of taking 60 per cent. of their income. Perhaps we are being a little too soft on them. Nevertheless, the Opposition's policy remains, and will remain in government, one of fairness in the tax system.

Mr. McCartney: Following the much-vaunted press conference held by the chairman of the Conservative party at which he attacked our proposal, the remnants of Fleet street at Wapping rushed out an opinion poll, in the hope that the general public would attack the Labour party's proposals. The opinion poll that was published after the press conference suggests that the general public believe that our proposals are acceptable and will lead to a fairer redistribution of the tax burden. We have received public support for our proposals.

Mr. Allen: My hon. Friend has made another clear and strong point. The serious slide in support for the Government began with the giveaway Budget to the super rich in 1988 by the right hon. Member for Blaby—now retired to those lush pastures of Kleinwort Benson, or wherever he may have gone. That was when the reaction set in. Ordinary people felt a sense of revulsion that the Government were abusing the tremendous unitary power that we give the Executive by rewarding people on the highest salaries so crudely and grossly. It was offensive and even before the recent furore about the poll tax people started to become aware of the immorality in Government economic policy and found it unacceptable.

The Financial Secretary's third question related to the tax burden, and I am sorry to say that that is where he really began to go wrong. As I pointed out earlier, the reductions in income tax are a con. They give money with one hand and take it away with the other through indirect taxation. Unfortunately there are only two tax bands: 25 per cent. and 40 per cent. and only one in 25 people pay 40 per cent. As such a minute proportion of the population pay the top rate, we really have only one tax rate; in effect we have a poll tax at national level which hits evenly across the board almost despite earnings, as the top rate of pay affects only one in 25 people. People increasingly consider that to be grossly unfair as it become more evident that the income tax reduction has been a con.

We need to examine carefully what the Government have done in other areas of taxation. One of the recent examples was revealed in the Public Accounts Committee paper from the National Audit Office which shows that that although considerable efforts are made to prosecute individuals who may overclaim or be overpaid very minimal amounts of social security, and bands of people scour the country trying to find people who may have got away with a few pounds here and there, the Inland Revenue is now £5 billion short of taxation that should have been collected. Once again, it is a matter of economic and social priorities. Efforts are made to prosecute

individuals who are almost always on very low incomes who may have got away with something beyond their entitlement, yet those who do not pay income tax, corporation tax or national insurance contributions on behalf of their employees can get away, almost with impunity, with creating very large tax debts that are currently sloshing around in the taxation system.

Taxation other than income tax needs to be considered in some detail. The hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) made an eloquent speech which may be admired from afar. He was very clear about the tax that inflation places on individuals. The erosive effects of inflation blow apart the Government's policy on child benefit. Child benefit is nominally frozen, but the effect of freezing a benefit in any inflationary economy is that it loses its value. That essential truth is revealed by the fact that child benefit has not been increased in line with inflation or need as it should have been. Child benefit is being left to wither on the vine, and, electoral unpopularity apart, the Government will have to come clean about their proposals for child benefit and decide whether to keep it or do away with it.

The burdens of taxation on individuals include the endless subsidies for agriculture. Apparently, we are being asked for more subsidies for beef producers. A large amount is given away each year to maintain the various stockpiles. I understand from an answer to a question that I asked last month that every person pays out £24 to ensure that the farm subsidies are continued.

Mr. McCartney: My hon. Friend referred to farm subsidies, but we should consider a much more important and telling point—the extent of rural poverty. Considerable sums have been made available over the past decade through the European Community. Those sums have supposedly been pumped into the rural community, but those who live and work in the rural community are forming a growing percentage of the people in Britain who are described as poor and an underclass. They are poor in terms of their income and because of the house price explosion in rural areas, forcing them out of village life and the communities in which they were born and brought up.

Rural poverty is one of the most serious forms of poverty in Britain. Because of the lack of knowledge about it, few, if any, resources are spent on alleviating it—even less than has been spent on urban programmes to attack deprivation. In rural areas, if a person is poor, he is forgotten. There is no possibility of private or public funds being provided to assist such people to get out of the poverty trap. Unfortunately, the issue of the tens of thousands of rural people caught in the poverty trap has not come out in today's debate.

Mr. Allen: My hon. Friend's expertise and his commitment to alleviating rural poverty are well known. He puts his points with his usual eloquence. The poll tax has compounded the problems. Many people did not believe that a wife at home would have to pay the poll tax. They believed that they would pay less because the poll tax was less than the rates bill, but the reality is that a wife at home pays the poll tax, just as it is paid by the husband who goes out to work. The news that a wife at home had to pay it came as a tremendous shock to many people.

Local government has to extract more money because of the Government's failure to maintain support for local authorities. The Government have deliberately shifted the burden of taxation away from themselves to the local authorities. The extra burden on the rates was equivalent to 3·5p of the 8p in the pound reduction in the basic rate of income tax over recent years. The central Government contribution to local authorities has fallen from 59 to 42 per cent. of total local authority expenditure. The money must be found somewhere and made up somehow. Invariably, that means that the local authority must either cut services, such as education and meals on wheels, or make good that expenditure from other sources.

Interest rates may now be called the John Major tax. It is not a painless way of extracting money from people to finance the mammoth trade deficit. It is not high-falutin' economics. Because we are not paying our way in the world and are importing more than we are exporting, we have to find the money to make up the difference. That is done by higher interest rates which, in turn, mean that the individual mortgage payer has to pay much more. In my constituency, an individual mortgage payer now pays £80 a month more on average for the Government's mistakes, managerial incompetence and bungling.

Exactly the same applies to industry. We learn in the press today that Coloroll, a major high street company, might go into liquidation. One of the main reasons for that appears to be the high interest rates. That well-known high street name, which was probably thought to be impregnable or, in Conservative parlance, "unassailable" just a few months ago might now go down the tube causing a loss of jobs and a large number of closures throughout the economy. The press reports cite extremely high interest rates as the main reason for that. Any business that wants to borrow to develop must pay absolutely prohibitive and punitive interest rates and they find it next to impossible to maintain that borrowing because all the income to that company is committed to repaying the moneylenders.

Mr. McCartney: One of the Government's commitments to industry in the shake-out of manufacturing in the early 1980s was that they would replace our manufacturing base with a service-based economy. The new service-based economy, in the high street providing goods and services, has declined in less than a decade. Coloroll will not be the only company that will go under with the loss of hundreds, if not thousands, of jobs between now and the next general election. Substantial numbers of the so-called sunshine industries which were supposed to provide new jobs to replace the thousands of jobs lost in manufacturing will no longer exist. In less than a decade they will have been forced out of business by the Government's high interest rates.

Mr. Allen: I referred to Coloroll because that is the latest example. That example could be rendered useless if the figures show that another company has been created. The Government will say, "Oh, we've lost one, but we've gained one." However, the new company may simply be a hamburger joint that has opened up in the constituency of the Financial Secretary to the Treasury. No doubt the Government would give that concern the same kind of weight as a multi-thousand pound and multi-thousand employee concern such as Coloroll.

There are other hidden taxes which the Government do not include in the equation as they claim that the tax burden has gone down when they mean that the income tax burden has gone down. Among those taxes are those that I like to call the privatisation taxes. We have all built

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up the gas, electricity and water industries over the years by contributing to them through our bills. Those bills included extra amounts for investment to build those industries up. We are now paying for those industries all over again to allow those who can afford to buy large blocks of shares to make certain speculative killings. I am not talking about the small shareholder who has one or two shares; I mean the big institutions which make the big killings.

When mentioning those privatisation taxes, we must consider the water company taxes. We have learnt today that over and above what we thought our water bills would be and what the Government admitted that they might be, there will be another 6·5 per cent. increase in taxation levied by the water companies. In other words, the consumer will have to pay more.

Those privatisation taxes apply to the gas and electricity concerns. We must also take account of the green dowry being handed to the water companies. Similarly, we must all pay a nuclear tax of £5 a week. That figure does not appear on our income tax returns or on people's weekly or monthly salary chits. However, that tax exists, we must pay it and it is part of the big con. Similarly, in the health service, prescription charges have risen by 1,000 per cent. since this Government came to power.

In connection with those hidden taxes we must bear in mind asset stripping, reports of which appear virtually weekly before the Public Accounts Committee. Reports show how the Government have sold assets that once belonged to the nation, such as Royal Ordnance or the British Airports Authority. Those reports show that major debts have been written off and that means that we, as income tax payers, must pay those debts. Money is given away because in some cases those assets are priced below their real value. We pick up the tab as income tax payers or, as is the case now, poll tax payers. It must be paid for. There is no such thing as a free lunch in these political days. The right hon. Member for Blaby may be enjoying the odd free lunch in his position, but the rest of us pick up the bill.

The hon. Member for Eastbourne talked about borrowing, how the previous Labour Government borrowed and this, that, and the other. He has a nerve. Having paid back a number of borrowings, out of the revenue from resources that were created by nature in the North sea, the Government have stopped the repayment programme. The programme has not only stopped but is in reverse and borrowings have started to gear up again.

The economy is in a mess, so we can understand the Government having to start borrowing once again. But there is an even more sinister motive. It is not to invest in the future, in the education of our children or in our industries, and not to rebuild the destroyed third of manufacturing industry; it is to invest in the 70-odd marginal seats that the Government need if they are to cling to power. We have seen how ruthless the Government can be with the poll tax. They framed the legislation so that Labour authorities were capped. At the same time, they massively funded Westminster, Wandsworth and other selected areas. Such political chicanery is now being funded by borrowing large amounts of money that the Secretary of State for the Environment will allocate to certain areas to ensure that the Conservatives have a better chance in marginal seats than they would if they were left to their own economic devices.

Mr. McCartney: The leader of Wandsworth council said that, now that the election is over, he may have to introduce a poll tax of £409. My local authority has a poll tax of £392. After millions of pounds of cuts in education, it has found itself capped despite the fact that 106 authorities spend more money per head than it does. Money that should have been spent in our area to retain services without high levels of poll tax was syphoned off to pay for votes in Wandsworth, Westminster and other areas.

Mr. Allen: Further to that point, the Labour parliamentary candidate in Nottingham, South, Alan Simpson, has done a calculation. Our poll tax in Nottingham is £209. If we had received the same subsidy as Westminster city council, our council would not have collected £290—it would not have collected anything. If we had had that level of subsidy we could have sent a cheque for £100 to every poll tax payer in Nottingham. Let us all have a subsidy. Let us all get that amount of money. It is going to certain areas to ensure a slightly better chance that the Conservative Government will be able to save their skin.

The Government's economic, income tax and general tax burden policies are just part of their catalogue of economic failure. They failed to control interest rates, which are now going through the roof and hitting mortgage payers and industry. They failed to control a trade deficit that is now totally out of order and is in a different realm from that of any of our competitors in the industrialised world—as a percentage of GNP, it is greater than that of any other industrialised nation in the world. That is the extent of the problem. That is the size of the trade deficit.

The exchange rate is all over the place, despite the efforts of the right hon. Member for Blaby, who got his come-uppance when he tried to do something about it. Our inflation rate is creeping higher and higher. If the Government wish to ensure that the inflation rate continues on even that path, they will have to take some serious steps.

Our investment record is absolutely appalling and falling. Even the Confederation of British Industry is saying that the Government are becoming separated from the people who were previously on their side. Conservative Members have referred to their relationship with the City. Yes, they still have a tenuous relationship with a number of people in the City, but their relationship with even the captains of industry is getting more and more tenuous——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Ways and Means Motion may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

Orders of the Day

SEXUAL OFFENCES BILL

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question proposed [11 May], That the Bill be now read the Third time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Debate to be resumed what day? No day named.

ACCESS TO HEALTH RECORDS BILL

As amended (in the Standing Committee)
Considered, Read the Third time and passed.

GAMING (AMENDMENT) BILL *[LORDS]*

Bill read a Second time and committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

POLL TAX (RESTORATION OF INDIVIDUAL PRIVACY) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 22 June.

RAPE IN MARRIAGE (OFFENCE) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 22 June.

HARE COURSING (ABOLITION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 15 June.

AMUSEMENT MACHINES (PROTECTION OF CHILDREN) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

CHLOROFLUOROCARBONS (CONTROL) BILL *[LORDS]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 15 June.

TRADE UNION ACT 1984 (AMENDMENT) BILL *[LORDS]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 22 June.

WAYS AND MEANS

GAMING (AMENDMENT) BILL *[Lords]*

Resolved,

That any Act resulting from the Gaming (Amendment) Bill *[Lords]* may provide for the charging of fees payable into the Consolidated Fund in respect of applications for certificates of consent under Schedule 2 to the Gaming Act 1968.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I did not hear any objection to the Hare Coursing (Abolition) Bill. Was it the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) or the hon. Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) who objected? Surely we should have the right to know which hon. Member objected—*[Interruption.]* One of my hon. Friends has suggested that it was the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr. Patnick) who objected—he is a Government Whip. It would be a new departure if the Government were objecting to that Bill.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It may be helpful to you to know that I distinctly heard my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) object to that Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: This is becoming a well-trodden path at 2.30 pm on Fridays. The procedure that we followed was correct.

Jones Brothers, Islington

Motion made, and question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

2.34 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I wish to raise the subject of the closure of Jones Brothers department store in Holloway in Islington. The store has served the people of north London extremely well for decades. It provides a much-valued service, a wide range of goods and courteous service and maintains some rather old-fashioned concepts about treating the customer well. It is used extensively by people in my constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), who I hope will have an opportunity to speak in the debate.

Most of us who live in Islington or neighbouring areas shop in the store on a regular basis. It employs about 500 people, many of whom are my constituents. The John Lewis Partnership, which owns the store, announced in January to an astonished work force and an angry public, that it intended to close it on 21 July this year. That closure decision prompted me to seek this debate.

The closure has aroused massive public protest. Thousands of local people have signed petitions, written letters to the John Lewis Partnership and to the store itself, withdrawn their accounts from John Lewis and demonstrated in large numbers their dismay and distress at the decision to close the store. Yet John Lewis has remained adamant about its decision. It has been arrogantly dismissive of local feelings, local people and local elected representatives.

One of the main reasons initially advanced by the John Lewis Partnership for its decision to close the store was that the building was worn out. It said that the building was in need of major refurbishment and that an urban development grant application made about five or six years ago to assist the refurbishment had been turned down by the Government. The application for urban development grant was made by the London borough of Islington on behalf of the John Lewis Partnership in 1984. It was for a public sector contribution of some £700,000 to the rehabilitation work. The application was refused in August 1985.

It is perhaps worth analysing why the Government refused that application. We should also bear in mind that had the Government accepted the application, we might not face the prospect of the store's closure. There are several discernible reasons for the Government's rejection of the application. First, there was an unusually high proportion of public sector leverage. Of course, that could readily have been discussed and reassessed in consultation among the three parties involved.

Secondly, it appears that at that time the Government were reluctant to use urban development grants for retail purposes. Since then, urban development grant has been made available to Arlington Securities for a shopping centre in Oldham, for a mixed-use scheme in Birmingham and even for the Business Design Centre in my constituency, which has close connections with the retail trade. The bar against any major consideration of support for retail purposes cannot persist.

The major reasons were outlined in the Department of the Environment letter to the London borough of Islington of 13 August 1985 which announced the refusal decision. The letter is worth quoting because it shows clearly what was in the Government's mind and because it may lead us to reflect that circumstances have changed. It states:

"The improvement in the store's trading performance attributable to recent management action has been noted and, whilst it is accepted that the project would be likely further to improve that performance, it did not appear that the store would be likely to close in the near future if the project was not carried out or that the project would in itself secure the future of the store if trade generally in the Nag's Head area were to fall off."

Note that the Government stated clearly that there seemed no likely prospect of closure and that that was why they did not believe that the urban development grant application should succeed. That circumstance has changed completely.

The letter continued:

"I would, however, add that this decision reflects the view taken of the merits of this particular development proposal. The Department are not ruling out in principle the use of Urban Development Grant in support of retail development in the Nag's Head area."

I ask the Government to put this case back on the agenda.

The likely impact of refurbishment or non-refurbishment of the Jones Brothers store will be considerable on the whole Holloway-Nag's Head shopping area. There is a danger that closure would have a spin-off effect on other businesses and stores nearby and the potential to cause a gradual decline in the quality of the shopping facilities and community life. Already since the announcement of the closure there has been a noticeable slackening of interest by businesses in the revival of the Nag's Head which the local authority has planned for many years. If Jones Brothers goes, others are likely to follow. Any cycle of decline of this sort removes the life, bustle and heart from an inner-city community. I do not want that to happen in the Holloway area.

My major question to the Minister this afternoon is: in the light of the announced closure by John Lewis Partnership, is he now prepared to consider sympathetically a new application for urban development grant, or as it now is, city grant, for this store? To John Lewis Partnership I have the following to say: I am deeply disappointed by the way in which the announcement was made without consultation with staff or local people and by the way in which the partnership has rebuffed all attempts to urge it to reconsider and all offers of assistance to enable it to reconsider its original decision. For a firm which supposedly prides itself on its responsibility to the community, its behaviour over the closure of the store has been unbelievable.

I am amazed at the changing reasons that the partnership has given for the closure. When in February I first took up the matter, it told me that the reason was simply that the building was worn out. When I came back on that and other issues subsequently, it told me that the real problem was that although the store was making a profit and no loss was being incurred on the current trading position, it was not making enough profit. I suspect that that gives us a glimpse of the real reasons behind the decision.

We are seeing part of a worrying trend upon which John Lewis and other department chains are embarked. They are closing their inner London stores in local shopping areas like Holloway. That applies also to Streatham, where the partnership simultaneously has announced the closure of Pratts. It is keeping its flagship

stores in central London—Oxford street and Sloane square—but otherwise it is moving to the outer fringes of the capital, catering only for motorists in new, amorphous and relatively unwelcoming superstores. Effectively they are saying, "You can shop in Oxford street or at Brent Cross, but there will be nothing in between."

In an inner city area such as Islington, my constituents are left high and dry. Many of them have no form of private transport. The policy makes bad economic sense, especially when a store such as Jones Brothers is making a profit. It removes a valuable asset for the community and it leads ultimately to the decline and eventual destruction of inner city areas.

I ask the Government to join me in urging the John Lewis Partnership to think again, even at this late hour. I ask the Government also to reconsider a refurbishment grant application. I ask the John Lewis Partnership, as passionately as I can, to change its mind.

2.46 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) for securing the debate and for giving me some of his time. As he explained, Jones Brothers is a store on the Holloway road, which is the border between our constituencies. The store is sited in Islington, North but its customers and staff come from throughout the borough and neighbouring boroughs.

We are in an extraordinary set of circumstances. The John Lewis Partnership apparently decided at high management level some time ago that Jones Brothers was earmarked for closure. I suspect that that is one reason why it has not spent as much money on the refurbishment and decoration of the store as it might have done over the past few years. Senior management arrived at the store one morning, summoned a meeting of the partners—that is the term used for those who work within the partnership—and informed them that the closure was due to go ahead. It then told a number of other people that this announcement amounted to staff consultation, agreement and support for the closure. As my hon. Friend said—I strongly support him—there is no evidence that the staff at Jones Brothers, or any other department store in the partnership, support the decision.

It is interesting, too, that normally store closures are met with some ignorance and passiveness by the local community. That is not the case with the proposed closure of Jones Brothers. Immediately after the announcement posters started to appear bearing the slogan "Save Jones Brothers". A local campaign was established and public meetings have been held. Many people have written to my hon. Friend and me. It is extraordinary that public meetings should be held in support of a department store. As my hon. Friend said, however, Jones Brothers is an unusual but genuine department store. It is the centre of the Nag's Head shopping area, which is patronised for most part by those who live in the area, and who generally walk there or travel there by bus. It is not a heavily motorised shopping area, although a major road runs through it. Jones Brothers is an important part of the area.

The John Lewis Partnership has been involved, in meetings with the supporters of the campaign, representatives of the local authority and shareholders, and at a meeting that I attended with the leader and chief executive of the council, Margaret Hodge and Eric Dean, in discussions on the closure of the store. We were told that the store was not being closed because it was losing money, but because it was not making enough money and that it was past its useful life.

At a later stage, however, we heard that the Brent Cross store is not only not making any more money than the Jones Brothers store, but possibly losing money. One wonders what was in the minds of the planners of the John Lewis Partnership when they decided to close a much-loved, successful inner city store that employs local people. That store commands a great deal of support and is doing extremely well. Why have they decided to close it in favour of amorphous, out-of-town shopping areas

I am concerned that the future of inner city shopping areas such as those my hon. Friend and I represent is now in the balance. If all the multiple stores are allowed or encouraged to move out to the North Circular road, the M25 ring or to the motorways leading into London to develop hypermarkets, what future is there for the 60 per cent. of families in communities such as ours who do not have access to a car or the elderly people who do not want a car or cannot drive one? They need a local store in which to shop. The only future for them is poor shopping facilities or expensive ones, or perhaps a combination of both.

The partnership's decision is detrimental to London, and even at this late stage I hope that it will realise that its public image of being a caring organisation that looks after its staff, which is concerned for its customers, which is never knowingly undersold and upon which it has built so much, will suffer greatly if it now undersells the people of Holloway by closing Jones Brothers. The people of Holloway have been loyal shoppers at the store and I hope that the partnership will not treat them in the cavalier manner that I fear.

If the Minister has time I hope that he will visit Holloway and the shop. He will then realise why we are worried. The area has a great deal of through traffic—fortunately the motorway scheme is not going ahead, but we are still fearful about the effects of red routes on traffic flow. The shopping area is relied upon by many not necessarily wealthy people. Jones Brothers is the centrepiece of the shopping area as it sells a variety of goods. If it goes I am certain that the other fairly large shops in the area will think twice about staying. We will then be left with a rundown, boarded-up shopping area alongside a major road on which much traffic hurtles through. The people of that community will be the losers, as will the 500 people who work in Jones Brothers. That will be a sad day.

If the store closes, John Lewis Partnership will be seen to be just like all the other high street multiples. It will be running away from the inner city areas and its loyal, perhaps poorer, customers. Instead it will move to its shiny stores on the outskirts of London where those who have sufficient money to own a large car can make bulk purchases. That course of action might lead to profitability for the partnership, but the people of Holloway will be left with a shopping area that will be made worse by such closure.

The partnership and the Government should recognise the support that the local community has given to the store and the campaign to keep it open. I hope that the Minister's reply is supportive and that he will do what he can to pressurise the partnership to change its mind. If he

[Mr. Jeremy Corbyn]

was prepared to support an urban development grant for the new development in the area that would guarantee the future of the shop.

2.53 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory): I congratulate the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) on securing this debate and on the eloquent way in which he made his case. I am also grateful for the weighty contribution from the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) whose neighbouring constituency has an interest in the matter.

I, too, was disappointed to hear about the John Lewis Partnership's decision shortly to close Jones Brothers. I regret the loss of jobs and the valuable facilities in that inner city area. I understand that it is one of a number of closures announced by the partnership and I hope that it will reconsider its decision.

The Government do not own or control the partnership, so the decision must ultimately be for the commercial judgment of the partnership, and doubtless it will listen to representations made to it. It is certainly not my job to tell it how to run its own business.

Our general policy on retail projects is that we will consider them for grant. There was an initial perception that we automatically refused applications to grant-aid retail developments. That is not the case. Indeed, we have funded a number of other retail developments.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury referred to the original decision to refuse urban development grant. It is true that an application to refurbish the store was made in early 1985. It received careful consideration by my Department and in particular by an experienced team of independent private sector professionals who were seconded to the Department as an appraisal team.

In this case, after extensive discussions with John Lewis and Islington borough council, the appraisers concluded that the project represented poor value for money. The grant requirement at that time was estimated at £700,000 to support a total investment of £1,750,000. That would have given a public to private investment gearing of 1:1·5, which would have been very poor compared with the average of 1:4.

Moreover, the project would have created only 25 new jobs and the cost per job of £28,000 compared unfavourably with the average at that time of only £3,500 to £4,000 per new job created.

The John Lewis Partnership argued that if the project did not go ahead, the existing 500 jobs in the store were at risk. The appraisers concluded that that was unlikely in the short term, and they were also of the opinion that the net benefits to the inner city were overall too small to justify a £700,000 grant.

Five years have elapsed since that initial decision to refuse grant, so the appraisers can claim to have been right in that the store did not shut in the short term, although regrettably the decision has now been taken.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury said that urban development grant had been made available for a number of other projects. He mentioned the royal agricultural hall—the so-called Aggie—which I have visited, and a fine place it is. It is a tribute to the entrepreneurial flair of the Morris family in getting the project together. That received urban development grant of £2,850,000, which helped to convert a potentially derelict hall into an international business design centre with a retail flavour to it. That demonstrates that projects in the retail or near-retail sector can receive favourable consideration. Overall Islington has received urban development grants with public and private sector investment in excess of £13,500,000. Apart from the royal agricultural hall, £375,000 of urban development grant was awarded in 1988 to redevelop United house, off the Caledonian road. The building was originally used for the manufacture of horse-drawn carriages but has now been transformed into 28 self-contained offices. That shows that Islington has had its fair share of urban development grant, and has been well provided for under the separate urban programme.

In 1989-90 Islington received £8,567,000 worth of urban programme grant, and for the current year the figure has been set at £8,550,000. A fair spread of projects have been aided in that way. I simply refer to one or two which appear to be directed especially towards helping the area round the store in question. For instance, I understand that about £52,000 was contributed towards the removal of a redundant railway bridge over Holloway road, close to the area, which is a useful contribution to its improved environment.

Nevertheless, I accept that closure of a store of that importance is a considerable blow. I do not overlook that fact. The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury sought assurances that future applications for city grants would be considered favourably. I can give no assurances about the availability of grants, but I certainly assure the hon. Members for Islington, South and Finsbury and for Islington, North that if and when an application is made it will receive the close attention of the department.

At present, no proposals are before the Department, so we are only speculating.

Mr. Smith: I am grateful to the Minister, and he has probably gone as far as anyone could reasonably expect him to at this stage. However, may I press him a little further because two factors have changed dramatically since five years ago? First, we are now faced with imminent closure of the store, which we were not at that stage. Secondly, it is becoming obvious that if the refurbishment of the store does not go ahead and it is closed we shall be faced with not only the loss of 500 jobs in the store but, over time, the loss of other facilities and jobs in the Holloway area. Will it be possible for the Government to take those factors into consideration if an application is made?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: If an application is received—it does not have to be from the John Lewis Partnership, it could be from any private sector development with a worked-out scheme to redevelop or refurbish the building, either as a retail centre of for some other purpose—it must be assessed on its merits and against the normal criteria. Certainly, any application will meet strong competition from elsewhere, because many projects are competing for what will always be a limited quantity of public money.

However, I can reassure the hon. Gentlemen that the strong representations that they have made this afternoon will be taken into account, if and when an application is

made, and that the application will receive close, and I hope reasonably speedy, attention. If some of the ex-employees, as they may then be, could benefit from a future grant we would take that into consideration.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at three minutes past Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 21 May 1990

TRANSPORT

Pensioners (Travel Subsidy)

68. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any proposals to introduce a greater subsidy on internal travel for United Kingdom pensioners.

Mr. Freeman: No. Local authorities already have powers to provide for reduced fares or free travel for pensioners on local public transport services.

London Assessment Studies

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to publish his Department's analysis of the public consultation response to the stage 2 options of the London assessment studies.

Mr. Atkins: The analysis has now been published. Copies are being placed in the Library.

Radiation

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has regarding the effect of gamma and neutron radiation upon food stocks on board Pacific nuclear transport vessels carrying spent nuclear fuel.

Mr. McLoughlin: Food is stored in the accommodation area situated at the stern of the ship, distant from the cargo. The design of these ships is such that there is no measurable difference in radiation from background levels where the food is stored.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will commission a study into the short, medium and long-term health effects of gamma and neutron radiation upon seafarers working on United Kingdom registered ships carrying spent nuclear fuel;

(2) if he will commission a study of the potential adverse health effects of being crew members on board ships carrying spent nuclear fuel.

Mr. McLoughlin: My Department commissioned the National Radiological Protection Board to study the radiation doses arising from the sea transport of radioactive materials, including spent fuel. The study was completed in 1988, and the main results presented during an international symposium on the packaging and transportation of radioactive materials held last year. These showed that the doses to which seafarers were exposed were well below recommended limits.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the emergency planning arrangements for ship-to-shore-to-ship communications in the event of a ship carrying spent nuclear fuel to the United Kingdom being involved in a serious incident involving the release of significant radiation.

Mr. McLoughlin: Adequate arrangements already exist for distress communications within the United Kingdom search and rescue region, for ship-to-shore-to-ship communication. We keep in close touch with BNFL's emergency planning arrangements and I have no reason to doubt the adequacy of the modern systems that would be used to communicate with any ship involved in a more distant incident of this kind.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the radiation protection standards for workers handling spent nuclear fuel in transport in the United States of America.

Mr. McLoughlin: The radiation protection standards for workers worldwide are based on the recommendations of the International Commission for Radiological Protection (ICRP) publication No. 26. I understand that these apply to all classes of radiation workers in the United States of America.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the radiation protection standards for workers handling spent nuclear fuel in transport in Scotland.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Ionising Radiations Regulations and their approved code of practice apply to all workers handling radioactive materials and contain the requirements to ensure the necessary standards of safety.

A52 (Noise)

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will specify the exact place where the measuring equipment was put within the curtilage of Arnold Lodge, Belvoir road, Bottesford, when his departmental survey into noise from the A52 trunk road was carried out in May 1989.

Mr. Atkins: The microphone was 1·0m horizontally from the face of the building, approximately midway along the south-facing side, and 1·2m above ground level.

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what specific date or dates the survey was carried out for his Department in May 1989 on noise arising from the A52 trunk road by-pass around Bottesford, Leicestershire; and what set of measuring equipment was used in each case.

Mr. Atkins: The noise survey was carried out between 8 and 23 May 1989. A CEL 162L environmental noise analyser was used throughout.

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport by what means his departmental survey of noise from the A52 bypass around Bottesford differentiated between *(a)* noise arising from the concrete surface of the road, *(b)* engine noise and *(c)* overall air displacement by traffic movement; and what allowances were made for variations in the direction of the prevailing wind.

Mr. Atkins: The survey did not differentiate between engine noise, noise from the road surface and air

displacement. It measured actual noise levels. Wind conditions were monitored during the survey. Surveys were abandoned and repeated when wind conditions were outside those specified in "Calculation of Road Traffic Noise (1988)".

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when his officials at the regional office in Nottingham intend to reply to the letter sent to them on 12 March by Mr. Colin Love of Arnold Lodge, Belvoir road, Bottesford, relating to the noise survey of the A52 road.

Mr. Atkins: My hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) wrote to me on 28 February with a similar letter from his constituent, Mr. Love. I met my hon. Friend on 27 March to discuss noise from Bottesford bypass and agreed to write to him about whether any further action could be taken. The regional office did not reply to Mr. Love pending this exchange, but will respond shortly.

Marine Collision and Avoidance Systems

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of funding given by his Department to the polytechnic of the south-west in each of the last five years for research into marine collision and avoidance systems.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department has not funded any research by the polytechnic of the south-west on marine collision and avoidance systems in the last five years. Research into collision avoidance costing £158,500 was, however, commissioned from another research organisation and completed in 1986. The Department is committed to a policy of funding research work through open tendering procedures.

Marine Pollution

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which marine pollution control unit ships were sent to the Rosebay incident; and *(a)* at what time each was ordered in, *(b)* at what time each arrived at the scene of the spillage and *(c)* at what time each began clean-up operations.

Mr. McLoughlin: As part of the overall response to the spillage of oil from the Rosebay, arrangements were put in hand by the MPCU at 17.00 on 12 May to locate and charter from commercial sources the nearest specific types of vessel required to mount as soon as possible an operation to mechanically recover oil from the sea surface. Subsequently, a vessel to carry the recovery equipment, the Laila Viking, and a coastal tanker to receive recovered oil, the BP Warrior, located at Great Yarmouth and Milford Haven respectively, were taken on hire with effect from 00.01 on 13 May. A tug at Brixham, the Pendragon B, to deploy the boom associated with the recovery equipment, was taken on hire at 04.00 on 14 May.

The three vessels, which had to work together as a team, arrived at the scene of the incident at 08.10 on 14 May, special heavy duty ship-separating fenders necessary for the operation were towed out from Kingswear and fitted in position by 19.00 on 14 May and final adjustments were then made to the system. Recovery operations began at first light on 15 May.

Further arrangements were started at 11.35 on 14 May to contract another coastal tanker to provide reserve storage space for recovered oil. Esso Tenby was taken on hire when she arrived on scene at 03.00 on 15 May; to date, it has not been necessary to use this vessel in operations.

The Warren Spring laboratory research vessel, Seaspring, a small self-contained tank vessel with an MPCU oil recovery system on board, was activated at 19.38 on 13 May for inshore work. She arrived on scene from Ipswich at 07.45 on 16 May and commenced clean-up operations at 14.42 the same day.

Motorcyclists

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to introduce legislation to make it obligatory for motorcyclists to use headlights or running lights during daytime.

Mr. Atkins: I have no plans at present. I do strongly advise motorcyclists to use dipped headlamps and to wear fluorescent material during the day to help make them more readily seen. This recommendation is included in the highway code.

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the countries that now have legislation making obligatory the daytime use of motorcycle headlights.

Mr. Atkins: Comprehensive information is not readily available. However, I understand that the Scandinavian countries, the Netherlands, West Germany, France and New Zealand have such a requirement.

Rail Electrification

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to ascertain how much grant could be paid by the European Commission towards the electrification of the Crewe to Holyhead main line.

Mr. Freeman: If an application for funds were made, yes.

Helicopters (Safety)

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will introduce regulations regarding the wearing of survival suits *(a)* by passengers, and *(b)* by crew, on helicopters operating on North sea rigs and platforms;

(2) whether he will introduce standards for survival suits to be worn by passengers in helicopters travelling to and from North sea rigs and platforms;

(3) if he intends to introduce regulations to ensure a standard lifejacket to be worn by helicopter passengers on North sea rigs and platforms.

Mr. McLoughlin: The statutory responsibility for the safety regulation of United Kingdom civil aviation rests with the Civil Aviation Authority.

I am advised by the authority that provisions already exist in the Air Navigation Order for the wearing of survival suits by crew members. The authority has no jurisdiction to legislate for the wearing of suits by passengers though I understand that the suits are normally so worn.

The carriage of lifejackets for the use of passengers is governed by the provisions contained in the Air Navigation Order and such lifejackets must meet the standards specified by the CAA.

Heavy Lorries (Pollution Control)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what response his Department is giving to the EEC proposed new emission standards for heavy lorries.

Mr. Atkins: The Commission has made a press announcement about the likely content of its proposals, but the final document has yet to be published.

From what I have seen, the proposals do not seem to go far enough. The Community's long-term aim should be to set a mid-1990s diesel standard based as closely as possible on the United States 1994 standard, both in limit values and test procedure. This is the strictest of all the diesel emission standards being considered worldwide. In particular, it would require substantial reductions in the amount of oxides of nitrogen (NOx) and particulates emitted by new vehicles.

Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list in the *Official Report* those airlines that have been fined under the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987, showing the number and total value of fines for the years for which statistics are available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have been asked to reply.

Liability was incurred in 14,295 cases in the period from the introduction of the Act (4 March 1987) to 28 February 1990. This gave rise to charges totalling £14·295 million. The following carriers and agents incurred liability in that three-year period:

Adria Airways
Aer Lingus
Aero Leasing
Aero Transporti Italian
Aeroflot Soviet Airlines
African Safari Airlines
Air 2000
Air Algerie
Air America
Air Atlantis
Air Canada
Air Enterprise
Air Europe
Air France
Air India
Air Lanka
Air Malta
Air Mauritius
Air New Zealand
Air Seychelles
Air UK
Air Vendee
Air Zimbabwe
Air-Tours
Aircraft Management Consortium
Al-Anwae
Alitalia Airlines
American Airlines
American Transair
Anglo-Soviet Shipping Co. Ltd.
Aravco Ltd.
Arkia
Austrian Airlines
Austrian Charter
Aviaco Airlines
Aviogenex
Balkan Bulgarian Airlines
Bangladesh Biman
Barrie & Nairn Ltd.
Birgenair
Birmingham Executive Airways
Bogazici Airlines
Braathens
Brantford Int. Agencies Ltd.
Britannia Airways
British Air Ferries
British Airways
British Island Air
British Midland
British West Indian Air
Brittany Air
Brittany Ferries
Burnett & Co. (Newcastle) Ltd.
CAAC Main Line China
Caledonian Airways Ltd.
Cameroon Airlines
Can Afrique
Canada 3000 Airlines Ltd.
Capital Airlines
Captain W. F. Taylor
Caribbean Airlines
Cathay Pacific
Christopher Massart-Weit
Clay Lacy Aviation Ltd.
Clearwater Holdings
Conair
Connect Air
Consolidated Contractors
Constantine Brantford Ltd.
Continental Airways
Cory Brothers
Crownair Canada
Cunard Line Ltd.
Currig Line Agents
Cutting & Co. (Humber) Ltd.
Cyprus Air
Czechoslovak Air
Das Air
DFDS Seaways
Dalla Avco
Dan Air
Dantata
Delta Air
Denholm Ship Agency
Egypt Air
El-Al Israel Airlines
Emirates
Escombe Group
Ethiopian Airlines
Eurocommander SA
Executive Aviation Services
Falmouth Fishselling Co.
Federal Express
Finnair
Forbes
Fred Olsen Lines
Funair
Gambia Air Shuttle Ltd.
Garuda Air
GB Airways Ltd. (Gibraltar)
Ghana Airways
Gulf Air
H. E. Kamal Adham
Hamble Agency
Handling Air
Heinz Ltd.
Highland Express
Hill Dickinson & Co.
Hispania Airlines
Holidair
Hoverspeed UK Ltd.
Iberia Airlines
Iceland Air
International Business Air
Interster SA
Iran Air
Iraqi Air
Istanbul Airlines
J. F. Marshall & Son Ltd.
Japan Airlines
John Cook & Son
KLM

Kalair USA Corporation
Kenya Airways
Khalid Salem Bin Mahfooz
Killick Martin & Co.
Korean Airlines
Kuwait Airlines
Lot Polish Air
Leafe & Hawkes Ltd.
Lineas Aereas Canarias
London City Airways
London European
Lufthansa
Luxair Airlines
Malaysian Airlines
Malev Hungarian Air
McAlpine Aviation Ltd.
McGregor Gow & Holland Ltd.
Messrs. Lovell, Hodder, Whitwill
Middle East Airlines
Midfly
Miriao Air
Misrair
Mobil Oil Corporation
Monarch Airlines
Morline
Mr. C. L. Szabo
Mr. R. Hitchens
Mr. Wojciech Kaliski
N. Cutting Agencies Ltd.
NLM Holland
Nation Air
National Iranian Tanker Corporation
Netherlines BV
Nigerian Airways
Noble Air
Norstar Shipping
North Sea Ferries
North West Air
Norway Line
Novair International Air
Oasis Air
Odyssey International
Okada airlines
Olau line Sheerness
Olympic air
Orion airways
P & O
Pakistan international air
Pan Am
Paramount airways
Partnair
Philippine airlines
Piedmont airlines
Pincervale Ltd.
Pinecroft Ltd.
Qantas air
Regional Flug GMBH
Resa
Roxburgh Henderson & Co. Ltd.
Royal air Maroc
Royal Jordanian air
Royal Nepal airlines
Ryan air
S Nayv
SAS
Sabena airlines
Sally Line Ltd.
Saudi Arabian air
Saudi Oger services
Scanair
Scottish express international
Sealink British ferries
Sealink Dieppe ferries
Seaport shipping
Security Pacific national bank
Servisair
Singapore air
Skylane air charter
South African air
Southern port services
Spanair
Spantax SA
Stelp & Leighton agencies Ltd.
Sterling air
Sudan air
Swissair
T & J Harrison Ltd.
TAP
TIA
TWA Trans world airways
T Ward shipping
Talair
Tarom Romanian airlines
Thai international airlines
Thames Orwell shipping
The Brunei Darussalam High Com.
Toros air
Transfavia
Transwede
Tunis Air
Turkish Airlines
UK Wal Shipping
Uganda Air Cargo
Uganda Airways
Uni Air
Unifly Express
US Air
Varig Brazilian Airlines
Viasa Venezuelan Air
Viking Air Services
Virgin Atlantic Air
Ward Air
West African Airways
World Way Canada
Worldways Canada
Xenez Industries
Yemen Air
Yugoslav Airlines
Zambian Airlines
Zas Airline of Egypt

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will review the workings of the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act 1987; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have been asked to reply.

As I said in reply to my hon. Friend's question on 26 April at column 286, there are no plans to review the workings of the Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act. My officials have however been conducting, with British Airways, a review of the individual cases in which it incurred liability to 30 June 1989, and consideration is being given to a number of general issues raised by British Airways as a result of that review. I will write to my hon. Friend about that review, when replying to his letter of 11 April.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Airlines

Mr. Amos: To ask the Lord President of the Council which airlines were used during the last 12 months for each parliamentary Committee on official parliamentary business; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It is not possible to provide accurately the information requested without disproportionate cost.

British Beef

Ms. Walley: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will consider suspending the use of certain British beef products in the House Refreshment Department; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Refreshment Department accepts the advice given by the independent scientists appointed by the Government and by the EC in respect of the use of British beef and beef products. It is therefore satisfied there is no need to change its policy on the supply of these items in the House.

"Manchester Evening News"

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make inquiries as to the reason why the *Manchester Evening News* has again become unavailable in the Tea Room and Smoking Room.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The free copies of the *Manchester Evening News* supplied to the House are being received irregularly. The authorities of the House have been in touch with the publisher, who will vary the delivery arrangements in an attempt to provide an improved service.

Workplace Nursery

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Lord President of the Council what is the provisional timetable for establishment of a workplace nursery for staff working in the House.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It is not possible at this stage to indicate any provisional timetable for the establishment of a workplace nursery. The Services Committee has, however, invited the Administration Department to prepare a feasibility study which it is hoped will be considered in the autumn.

Select Committee on Procedure

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Lord President of the Council when he will publish the Government's response to the report by the Select Committee on Procedure on the scrutiny of European legislation.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Government's response to the report by the Select Committee on Procedure on the scrutiny of European legislation has today been laid before Parliament. The recommendations in the report covered a wide range of issues and the Government have accepted the majority of the Procedure Committee's recommendations. In particular:

The Government have agreed in principle the central recommendation on the establishment of Special Standing Committees on European Community documents. These would be appointed for a whole Session. When the number of Committees has been decided, consideration will be given to the inclusion of Members who express particular interest or expertise in the subject areas covered by the relevant Committee. The Committees would also have the power to hear statements from Ministers and question them before debating the document under consideration. The Government have also accepted that there should be a significant shift of scrutiny debates away from the Floor of the House and into these new Committees.

On the timing of scrutiny debates, the Government have reaffirmed their intention to bring proposals rapidly before the Select Committee on European Legislation and arrange prompt debates where the Committee so recommends. The Government have accepted the recommendation that the six-monthly debates on the "Developments in the Community" White Papers should be made more forward-looking. The Government recognise the benefits to be gained from building up informal links with Members of the European Parliament and have asked the House of Commons Services Committee to consider some practical measures to achieve this.

The Government believe that these changes and the other elements of their response will help to bring the scrutiny procedures up to date and allow Parliament to play its full and proper part in the consideration of Community legislation.

The House will be given an early opportunity to express its views on the report and the Government response. Following this debate, the Government will bring forward detailed proposals, including any necessary amendments to Standing Orders with a view to operating the new arrangements from the start of next Session.

Offices

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will purchase the office space currently available in the Sanctuary, Westminster for the use of hon. Members or their staff.

Mr. Chope: I have been asked to reply.

There are no proposals to extend the parliamentary accommodation beyond the work currently under way to redevelop the Bridge street site.

ENERGY

Deep-mined Coal

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has as to the average level of Government subsidy per tonne of deep-mined coal each year since 1987 in each European Economic Community country and in the United States of America.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to my predecessor's answer of 23 March 1989, at columns *764-65*, to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas), which gave the European Commission's estimates of the subsidy per tonne in coal-producing member states for the years 1985 to 1987. The equivalent figures for 1988 have not yet been published by the Commission.

The United States of America does not provide financial support to its coal industry.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy on what dates ministerial meetings on energy efficiency, as referred to in the answer to the hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) of 13 November 1989, *Official Report*, column *95*, have been held.

Mr. Wakeham: Meetings of Ministers with responsibility for energy use in Departments have been held on 19 October 1989, 31 January 1990 and 2 May 1990.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what provisions have been made for the disposal of radioactive waste arising from the newly agreed contracts to reprocess spent research reactor nuclear fuel from Berlin, Madrid and Petten, at Dounreay.

Mr. Baldry: In line with all overseas reprocessing contracts since 1976, these contracts will have to include options for the return of wastes arising. The Government intend that such options should be exercised and wastes returned.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what safeguards agreements will apply to the spent nuclear fuel to be imported from research reactors in Madrid, Petten in the Netherlands and the Hahn-Meitner Institute in Berlin for processing at Dounreay.

Mr. Baldry: All operations at Dounreay are subject to Euratom safeguards and to the terms of the UK-Euratom-IAEA safeguards agreement (INFCIRC/263).

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what evaluation he has made of the recent scientific report by the International Atomic Energy Agency criticising the adequacy of the scientific work conducted by Nirex in support of its repository research programme.

Mr. Baldry: UK Nirex Ltd. commissioned the independent review by the International Atomic Energy Agency of the Nirex research and development programmes on deep repository post-closure safety and site assessment.

The report of the review was received in July 1989 and has been carefully studied. The IAEA panel of experts was impressed with the quality of the programme and the vast strides it had already made. They concluded that all major topics of interest were being addressed; that gaps in knowledge had been identified; and that R and D to fill those gaps had been initiated. They noted that the work could not be completed until site specific data were available and set down a number of areas in which such data would be required. With this qualification they expressed the view that the work being done by Nirex gave promise of a highly competent professional appraisal of the suitability of either or both the proposed two sites for intermediate and low-level waste disposal.

The research programme on which the panel was asked to comment was on-going and incomplete; in particular Nirex was well aware before it commissioned the review that site specific data would be required before the work could be taken to a conclusion. Nirex welcomed the panel's suggestions and advice and where appropriate these have been incorporated in the future research programmes.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will call for an update of the report prepared in 1980 by the safety and reliability directorate of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority on the risk potential of a gas tank explosion and subsequent fire engulfing a ship docked at Barrow containing spent reactor nuclear fuel.

Mr. Baldry: The report referred to by the hon. Member was prepared in connection with a planning application which has since been granted. It is for those who commissioned the report to decide whether they wish to update it.

Nuclear Material

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy on how many occasions in 1987, 1988, 1989 and 1990 to date, respectively, nuclear material has been withdrawn from safeguards under article 14 of the 1978 tripartite safeguards agreement between Euratom, the International Atomic Energy Agency and the United Kingdom; if the nuclear material involved in each case was plutonium, enriched uranium or natural uranium; and what was the purpose for each withdrawal.

Mr. Baldry: Details of withdrawals of material from safeguards under the tripartite safeguards agreement are supplied to the IAEA and Euratom on a strictly confidential basis. It would not be in the public interest to publish this information.

British Nuclear Fuels

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will require British Nuclear Fuels plc to apply the best available technology not entailing excessive cost to its operations at Sellafield, Calder Hall and Chapelcross works, Capenhurst and Springfields.

Mr. Baldry: British Nuclear Fuels plc already uses the best appropriate technology to conduct its operations at these establishments in a safe and economical manner.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what will be the budget for the advertising campaign to publicise the flotation of the regional electricity companies.

Mr. Wakeham: I have nothing further to add to the answer I gave the hon. Member on this matter on 1 May 1990 at column *474*.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what was the total spent by his Department in 1989-90 on fees to organisations advising on electricity privatisation; and what is the budget for the current year.

Mr. Wakeham: The latest forecast outturn for 1989-90 is £12·4 million. There may, however, be some end of year adjustments which remain to be taken into account. For the current year a provision of £34·5 million has been sought.

Nuclear Electricity

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the price at which Nuclear Electric is contracted to supply electricity to the public electricity suppliers for the next eight years.

Mr. Wakeham: This is a commercial matter for Nuclear Electric plc.

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what proportion of the unit cost of electricity produced from nuclear sources is attributable to storage and physical protection charges for plutonium and used uranium.

Mr. Baldry: This is a matter for Nuclear Electric plc.

Office of Electricity Regulation

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will call for a report from the Director General of Electricity Supply as to the cost of production of the first report from OFFER, broken down into *(a)* printing costs, *(b)* design costs and *(c)* photography.

Mr. Baldry: I have no plans to call for such a report from the Director General of Electricity Supply.

Sizewell B

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) when he will publish the updated cost estimates for Sizewell B which Nuclear Electric sent him on 16 May;

(2) whether the estimates for the updated cost of Sizewell B which he has received from Nuclear Electric include provision for the costs associated with the intended follow-on pressurised water reactors.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) whether any new information has been received from Nuclear Electric regarding the costs of a single development of a pressurised water reactor; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will publish the most recent cost estimates for Sizewell B from Nuclear Electric; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wakeham: Nuclear Electric plc has just sent to me its latest progress report on Sizewell B and will discuss it with my Department. The projected costs of the station are a matter for NE. It will decide what to publish when the discussions with my Department are complete.

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he or another Minister in his Department last visited the Sizewell B nuclear power plant site; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: I visited Sizewell on 10 April.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Tropical Forests Action Plan

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make it his policy to oppose the approval of the tropical forest action plan by the European Community until the comprehensive internal review has reported; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: I will be discussing tropical forestry, including the tropical forestry action plan, at the European Development Council on 29 May. I shall be stressing the need for reform of the TFAP in the light of the independent review now under way. I set out my views on the TFAP in a speech to the Friends of the Earth "Rainforest Harvest Festival" on 17 May, copies of which I have placed in the Library and sent to the hon. Member.

Third World

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to start an initiative to reduce the use of tobacco and other drugs in Third world developing countries.

Mrs. Chalker: The health hazards of tobacco smoking are well established and the Government recognise that tobacco smoking is becoming an increasing health problem in developing countries. The reduction of tobacco consumption in developing countries is a matter for the Governments of the countries concerned. The United Kingdom, through its subscription to the WHO, is supporting that organisation's "Tobacco or Health" programme which helps countries develop tobacco control policies. In addition, the Government stand ready to draw on their wide experience of anti-smoking health education and the epidemiology of smoking-related diseases in order to advise Governments who request help to formulate their tobacco control policies.

As the Prime Minister announced at the world ministerial drugs summit in London in April, the United Kingdom is setting up a demand reduction task force to provide expert advice to developing countries on ways of reducing the demand for drugs. It will draw in our expertise in community drug prevention initiatives, drugs education, treatment and rehabilitation.

SCOTLAND

Fisheries

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information his Department has, by region, on the employment destination of ex-employees in the Scottish fish-catching sector who have left the industry since 1985.

Mr. Lang: My Department has no information on this.

Lothian Health Board

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretaryof State for Scotland whether any additional money was provided to Lothian health board in each of the last five years to fund the doctors' and nurses' review body awards.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Additional money towards the pay review body awards was made available to health boards in each of the last three years.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been Lothian health board's annual budget over the last five years up to and including the year ended 31 March 1990; and by what percentage it has been over or under SHARE parity in each of these years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is as follows:

	Final allocation	*Distance from SHARE parity Per cent. over*
1985-86	218·997	2·11
1986-87	234·032	1·24
1987-88	253·031	0·8
1988-89	281·406	0·35
1989-90	299·951	0·18

Sight Tests

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the recent survey into sight test levels commissioned by the Department of Health also covers Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Yes.

General Practices (Budgetary Status)

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of patients in each health board in Scotland on the lists of the 41 practices in Scotland referred to in his answer of 20 March, *Official Report*, column *580*, to have declared an interest in applying for budgetary status.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The number of practices in Scotland that have so far indicated an interest in the general practitioner funding scheme has subsequently risen to 46. The information is set out in the following table.

Health board	*Expressions of interest*	*Patients covered '000s*
Ayr and Arran	4	48·0
Argyll and Clyde	4	35·6
Dumfries and Galloway	2	21·2
Forth Valley	1	10·2
Grampian	14	149·6
Lanarkshire	3	32·5
Lothian	6	44·0
Greater Glasgow	4	31·5
Tayside	8	53·1
Fife	1	8·0
TOTAL	46	433·7

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what advice he is giving to local education authorities about school meals in connection with bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 18 May 1990]:* Education authorities have been advised of the range of measures adopted by the Government to protect the public from what is a remote and theoretical risk. They can continue to offer beef in school meals with complete confidence.

Social Work Departments

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his written answer of 14 May on his powers to intervene in the operations of regional social work departments, if he will list the statutory functions that a local authority social work department should have failed to carry out before he uses his default powers under section 211 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973; and if he will make a statement as to the circumstances under which he would use those powers.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 18 May 1990]:* Action under section 211 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 may be taken in respect of a local authority failing to carry out any of its statutory duties. A decision would be made in each case after careful consideration of the circumstances.

Technical Education

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the criteria for funding Robert Gordon's institute of technology under the engineering targeting scheme; what funds were allocated by the Scottish Education Department; what are the current criteria for funding the institute; and what Scottish Education Department funding has been allocated for the financial year 1990-91.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 17 May 1990]:* Under the "switch to technology" initiative, additional recurrent and capital funding was provided to central institutions over a three-year period on the basis of an assessment of their proposals to increase intakes to courses in engineering and technology. During the period 1985-88, Robert Gordon's institute of technology received under the initiative additional recurrent grant of £0·731 million and additional capital funding of £2·858 million.

All 17 grant-aided colleges now receive grant in aid towards their recurrent costs on the basis of target student numbers weighted by subject group and mode of attendance. Capital funding to meet approved building and equipment needs is allocated on the basis of an assessment of bids from the colleges. As I announced on 22 February 1990, at columns *869-70*, grant in aid of £11·953 million has been allocated to the institute for the financial year 1990-91. In addition, capital funding of £0·520 million will be made available.

PRIME MINISTER

Waddesdon Manor (Meeting)

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Prime Minister what was the total cost to public funds of the recent meeting with the President of France at Waddesdon manor, Buckinghamshire; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The estimated cost to public funds is £56,500, of which £15,600 falls to my office.

Iraqi Arms Purchase

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister what consideration she is giving to the implications for the level of co-ordination between Customs and Excise, the Defence Export Services Secretariat and the Department of Trade and Industry of the Iraqi gun affair.

The Prime Minister: On the arrangements for co-ordination between the Department of Trade and Industry and Customs and Excise in this area, I refer to the reply given on 25 April by my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) at column *239*.

There is also a high level of co-ordination, both formal and informal, between the Department of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Defence on matters relating to export control.

All these arrangements are kept under regular review.

Advisers

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list in the *Official Report* the names and positions of her advisers who were not career civil servants; from which vote they were paid; and who made the decision on their salary level for each year since 1981.

The Prime Minister: The information is as follows:

Year and Name

1981

Professor A. Walters

1982
C. W. Monckton
W. R. F. Mount
P. Shipley

1983
D. C. Hobson
O. Letwin
D. L. Pascall
J. Redwood
R. Young

1984
C. E. Hartley-Booth
P. T. Warry
J. B. Wybrew

1985
Professor B. Griffiths

1986
N. R. Blackwell
G. R. J. Guise

1987
Mrs. T. Gaisman
A. J. O'Sullivan

1988
Mr. G. D. Bourne
A. Dunlop
I. K. Whitehead

1989
G. R. J. Guise
H. Harris-Hughes
Mrs. A. Ponsonby
Professor Sir Alan Walters

1990
R. Harris

The advisers are paid from the Cabinet Office (OMCS) vote (class XIX, vote 1). Salary levels are negotiated with the individual by the Cabinet Office.

Jordanian Defence Package

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Prime Minister whether her office approved the mix of moneys from Midland Montagu bank and the Ministry of Defence budget to service the Jordanian defence package.

The Prime Minister: The financial arrangements governing defence sales of this kind are a matter of commercial confidence.

THE ARTS

Painters and Sculptors

75. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Minister for the Arts if he has any plans to introduce a scheme by which painters and sculptors may benefit financially from the proceeds of sales of their work subsequently to the initial sales of individual pieces of work.

Mr. Luce: No. The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry announced in the 1986 White Paper "Intellectual Property and Innovation" that he did not intend to introduce such a scheme because it would be complex to administer and the disadvantages would outweigh any benefit to the artist.

DEFENCE

Nuclear Materials (Transport)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department has conducted any independent assessments or tests assessing the safety of transport containers used by his Department to move nuclear materials.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Yes. All containers used by the Ministry of Defence to transport nuclear materials undergo testing to standards laid down in the regulations of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

US Warships

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list United States naval warship visits to British ports from 23 May 1989 to the present date; the time at which they visited; and the type of vessel involved.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information requested is as follows:

Ship	*Type*	*Port*	*Arrive*	*Depart*
Iowa	Battleship	Portsmouth	3 July 1989	8 July 1989
Preble	Destroyer	Loch Ewe	4 July 1989	4 July 1989
Providence	Submarine	Portsmouth	14 July 1989	20 July 1989
John Hall	Frigate	Greenock	17 July 1989	23 July 1989
Spruance	Destroyer	Greenock	17 July 1989	23 July 1989
Pawcatuck	Oiler	Greenock	17 July 1989	23 July 1989
Aubrey Fitch	Frigate	London	22 September 1989	4 October 1989
William V. Pratt	Destroyer	Portsmouth	22 September 1989	26 September 1989
Mahan	Destroyer	Devonport	23 September 1989	15 October 1989
		Rosyth	9 November 1989	14 November 1989
		Rosyth	24 November 1989	28 November 1989
Philadelphia	Submarine	Portsmouth	16 October 1989	20 October 1989

Ship	Type	Port	Arrive	Depart
L. Mendal Rivers	Submarine	Portsmouth	15 November 1989	20 November 1989
Pargo	Submarine	Portsmouth	12 March 1990	19 March 1990

Equipment (Environmental Impact)

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones), *Official Report*, 3 May, column *646*, he will publish in the *Official Report* a full list of the publications on environmental impact of equipment produced for his Department to which he refers.

Mr. Neubert: It would require disproportionate cost to identify and list all the publications by the Department which refer to the environmental impact of defence equipment. These range from the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1990 to, where appropriate, environmental impact assessments of individual projects.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones), *Official Report*, 3 May, column *646*, on the ordering of equipment for his Department, he will now make it his policy to make it a condition of purchase for his departmental suppliers that they conduct an environmental audit of their corporate operations.

Mr. Neubert: No, it is the responsibility of the individual companies concerned to make sure that their corporate operations meet the appropriate environmental legislation and regulations.

Soldiers (Germany)

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many soldiers serving in Germany in each of the last four years have been remanded for trial by district court martial; and how long was the period between each incident which led to the trial and the start of the court martial proceedings.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The number of soldiers serving in Germany who were remanded for trial by district court martial in each of the last four years was:

	Number
1986	404
1987	387
1988	417
1989	359

Each case varies depending on its complexity, the degree of investigation required, the plea, availability of witness etc; a straightforward case might take three months, a complex case around 18 months. It would not be possible to give the further information requested without disproportionate cost.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many soldiers serving in Germany in each of the last four years have been involved in incidents which have been the subject of Royal Military Police investigations; and how long it has taken in each case *(a)* for an initial report to be made, *(b)* for initial legal advice to be given, *(c)* for final legal advice to be received for a commanding officer to decide on disciplinary action and *(d)* where relevant, for district court martial proceedings to begin.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The number of soldiers serving in Germany who were involved in incidents which were the subject of Royal Military Police investigations was:

1986	1987	1988	1989
[1]2,997	3,175	2,947	4,757

[1] Estimate.

I am afraid that the detailed information requested could not be produced without disproportionate cost.

Norton Manor Camp

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what inquiries he has made into the circumstances in which, on 15 May, a hole was cut in the perimeter fence of Norton Manor camp, near Taunton; if he is satisfied with the security arrangements at the camp; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: On 15 May a security patrol at Norton Manor camp noticed an irregularity in the perimeter fence which suggested that an unauthorised entry might have occurred. As a precautionary measure, a full search of the camp was carried out, but no evidence of entry by unauthorised persons was found. It now appears that the irregularity discovered by the patrol was a section of fence which had been repaired, although the repair had not been recorded in the usual way. I am satisfied that appropriate security arrangements are in place at Norton Manor camp, although these are kept under constant review.

Low Flying

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he plans to publish accident rates for individual types of Royal Air Force aircraft;

(2) if he plans to publish the results of the skyguard monitoring in the United Kingdom of low-flying aircraft on an annual basis;

(3) if he plans to introduce an address and telephone number which people can contact if they wish to complain about low flying;

(4) if he will publish the list of approved targets for Royal Air Force low-flying aircraft in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Neubert: The points raised are recommendations by the House of Commons Defence Committee, whose report on low flying (HC 120) is currently being considered very carefully. There will be a response to all of the report's recommendations in the Government's reply to the Committee.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Home Ownership

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proposals he has to assist home owners.

Mr. Ryder: Interest rates will continue to be kept as high as needed to reduce inflation. Everyone has far more to fear from a resurgence of inflation than from a period of higher interest rates.

Interest Rates

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the effect of the current level of interest rates on manufacturing industry.

Mr. Ryder: Inflation is the greatest threat to the prosperity of all manufacturing firms. The Government will therefore keep interest rates as high as necessary for as long as necessary as part of their firm anti-inflationary policy.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he will next meet the Governor of the Bank of England to discuss interest rate policy.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he will next meet the Governor of the Bank of England to discuss interest rate policy.

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor meets the Governor of the Bank of England from time to time to discuss a variety of matters.

European Monetary Union

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what contribution his Department will be making to the conference on monetary union in Europe, organised by the Federal Trust for Education and Research, to be held in London on 24 May.

Mr. Lilley: I will be addressing this conference.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his reply of 9 May, if he will make a statement on the anticipated effect upon the rate of inflation of the 30 per cent. by which 1989's domestic rate revenue would have had to be increased to meet the current anticipated local authority revenue from the community charge.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 16 May 1990]:* Local authorities' spending decisions have added 1 percentage point to the inflation rate in April. The effect would have been very similar had that spending been financed by domestic rates.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his reply of 9 May, if he will make a statement on the anticipated effect upon the rate of inflation of the £2·5 billion real terms increase in local authority revenues in the current financial year over 1989.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 16 May 1990]:* The average personal community charge in Great Britain is estimated to be 34 per cent. higher than the analogous rates per head figure in 1989-90 for households covered by the RPI. This increase has added about 1 percentage point to the annual inflation rate.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Finance

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of the total standard spending assessment for England for 1990-91 was designated to be raised from *(a)* business rate income, *(b)* community charge income at standard spending and *(c)* the revenue support grant; and what are the estimates for England for 1990-91 of actual sums raised from (i) business rate income, (ii) community charge income and (iii) the revenue support grant.

Mr. Chope: The information requested is as follows: *(a)* 35 per cent.; *(b)* 33 per cent.; *(c)* 32 per cent.; and (i) £10·4 billion; (ii) £12·7 billion; (iii) £9·4 billion.

Local authority revenue expenditure is also funded by means of special grants and the use of balances or reserves.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment by what percentage net current spending by local authorities has risen in real terms since *(a)* 1978-79 and *(b)* 1984-85.

Mr. Chope: Local authority net current spending in England has increased in real terms by 20 per cent. and 10 per cent. between 1978-79—1989-90 and 1984-85—1989-90 respectively.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will add to the list of exemptions from poll tax women who have been made homeless because of domestic violence.

Mr. Chope: A person is subject to the personal community charge in respect of his or her sole or main residence. A period of residence within a women's refuge does not confer exemption from the community charge unless it is a night shelter or hostel. In general, women will not be registered at refuges for the community charge unless, exceptionally, they are solely or mainly resident there. In almost all cases women stay in refuges for short periods, during which they will be registered for the personal community charge at their previous address.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met representatives of the local authority associations to discuss changes to the poll tax; and if he will list other organisations he proposes to consult on the subject.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has not met with representatives of the local authority associations specifically to discuss changes to the community charge. He has no plans to change the principle of the charge. He did have a wide-ranging discussion when he met the leaders of the Association of County Councils, the Association of Metropolitan Authorities and the Association of District Councils on 27 March.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimates he has made of the cost of

collection under the old rates system in England for 1990-91; and what is the estimated cost of collecting poll tax for the year 1991-92.

Mr. Chope: The estimated cost of collecting rates in 1989-90 was £200 million. Our estimate of the total cost of collecting and administering the community charge in 1990-91 is £400 million. No estimate has yet been made of the costs of collecting the community charge in 1991-92, but they will be taken into account in the revenue support grant settlement.

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the estimated cost in a full year of excluding non-earning spouses from liability to the community charge.

Mr. Chope: It is estimated that there are about 5 million spouses of taxpayers who do not themselves pay income tax. Assuming an average personal community charge of £363 the revenue lost from exempting them would be about £1·8 billion.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to ensure that residents of sheltered housing cannot be required to fund the community charge of a warden's spouse who plays no part in the management of the development.

Mr. Chope: The spouse of the warden of a sheltered housing scheme is liable for his or her own community charge and receives a separate bill. The charges to residents of such schemes are a contractual matter for agreement between residents and operators.

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what were *(a)* the numbers of ratepayers and the average payment for each ratepayer in 1989-90 and *(b)* the numbers of community charge payers and the average payment for each community charge payer in 1990-91.

Mr. Chope: In 1989-90 there were 18 million domestic ratepayers paying an average of £516. In 1990-91 there are 36 million charge payers and the average charge bill in England at 1 April is £363.

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish a list in the *Official Report* of the amount of the poll tax adjustment in respect of forecast non-payment for each of the authorities in the northern region; and whether he will give the average national figure for such adjustments.

Mr. Chope: This information is not available.

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average level of community charge in London in boroughs that were *(a)* Conservative controlled and *(b)* Labour controlled before 3 May.

Mr. Chope: The level for Conservative controlled is £285 and for Labour controlled £445. The figures are based on charges at 1 April 1990.

Endangered Species

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for improving the implementation of CITES controls; and whether, in view of the letter from the head of the endangered species branch of his Department (WLF/2050/411) to the International Council for Bird Preservation, of 25 April, he will adopt a system of the reverse listing of birds.

Mr. Trippier: Since 1 January 1984 CITES controls have been applied in the United Kingdom and in the rest of the European Community by EC regulation 3626/82. The implementation of regulation 3626 is kept under constant review by the EC CITES committee, which is comprised of representatives of the CITES authorities of member states. A new regulation to replace regulation 3626/82 is to be prepared and will take account, inter alia, of decisions resulting from an independent study of the implementation of regulation 3626/82. It will be for the EC CITES committee to consider if the reverse listing of birds and other species is to be incorporated in the new regulation.

The reverse listing of birds in the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act 1976 remains extant in the United Kingdom for species not covered by EC regulation 3626/82.

Twin Towns (USSR)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the towns and cities in the United Kingdom which are currenty twinned with towns and cities in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics; and if he will make a statement on his proposals for promoting such arrangements and increasing their effectiveness in developing people-to-people contact especially between young people.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The information requested is as follows:

Overseas community	*British community*
Chimkent	Stevenage
Crimean Region	Derbyshire
Donetsk	Sheffield
Gatchina	Monklands
Gorlovka	Barnsley
Kiev	Edinburgh
Kostroma	Durham
Krasnya Presnya	Hackney
Kustany	Kirklees
Kutaisi	Newport
Leningrad	Manchester
Leningradsky District	Hounslow
Minsk	Nottingham
Moskvoretsky	Lambeth
Novgorod	Watford
Novorossiysk	Plymouth
October District	Newham
Odessa	Liverpool
Rostov-on-Don	Glasgow
Sochi	Cheltenham
Sukhumi	Kilmarnock
Tbilisi	Bristol
Vinnitsa	Peterborough
Vladimir	Canterbury
Volgograd	Coventry
Voroshilovgrad	Cardiff
Yalta	Margate
Yaroslavl	Exeter
Zaporozhye	Birmingham

The Government believe that twinning links can play an important role in breaking down barriers and developing mutual trust. To that end local authorities are encouraged through the local government international bureau to

develop twinning links with their east European counterparts, particularly where fully democratic local government is being established.

Housing

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will make a statement on the future expansion of social housing, in terms of Government grant, private funding, local authorities funding and housing associations in *(a)* the United Kingdom as a whole and *(b)* Suffolk and Norfolk;

(2) if he will make a statement on the future of social housing funding and grant aid to housing associations from 1991-92 onwards.

Mr. Chope: Housing associations are to be the main providers of new subsidised housing for the future; local authority expenditure on housing will increasingly be focused on renovation of their own stock. Gross expenditure by the Housing Corporation on grants and loans to housing associations in England is planned to rise from £938 million in 1989-90 to £1,736 million in 1992-93. In addition, associations can expect some continuing support from local authorities. By 1992-93, 90 per cent. of the housing association schemes for rent which the corporation approves for grant are expected to be on a "mixed funding" basis: that is, the proportion of scheme cost not met through grant will be financed by borrowing from the private sector; the programme of low-cost home ownership schemes is already wholly mixed-funded. Housing associations' output, in England and in Suffolk and Norfolk, should therefore increase greatly as a result of increased public expenditure provision and growing use of private finance. My Department is not responsible for housing in other parts of the United Kingdom.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on affordable rents in social housing; and what definition of affordability his Department uses in its policy.

Mr. Chope: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave on 25 April 1990 to the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo), at column 326.

Inland Waters

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many United Kingdom inland river, broad and lake waters used extensively for bathing and water recreation passed the European Community mandatory and guideline parameters in the last year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Information is held centrally only for those waters identified for the purposes of directive 76/160/EEC. No inland water has been found to meet the criteria for identification.

Bathing Waters

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many United Kingdom coastal bathing waters passed the European Economic Community requirements for all mandatory parameters for the last year in which figures are available; and what percentage this number was of the total.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I refer my hon. Friend to the report on the quality of United Kingdom bathing waters for the 1989 bathing season which my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside placed in the Library on 25 January 1990 (*Official Report*, column *785*).

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many United Kingdom bathing waters passed the European Economic Community 76/160 recommended guideline values in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The directive's very demanding guide value standards were met in 1989 for the coliform parameters by 179 (41 per cent.) of the 440 identified bathing waters; 76 per cent. of these waters complied with the mandatory values.

Private Rented Accommodation

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many private rented sector units of accommodation there were in 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989 and 1990 to date.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Information about the numbers of dwellings rented privately, or with a job or business and about the numbers of dwellings rented from housing associations, is shown in table 2.22 of "Housing and Construction Statistics Part 2", No. 39. These figures show numbers at December 1988 and September 1989; figures for later periods are not yet available. A copy of this publication is available in the Library.

Assured Shorthold Tenancies

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the change in market rents since the introduction of assured shorthold tenancies.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Detailed information is not yet available. However, my Department will shortly be setting in hand studies to evaluate the effects of deregulation, including the impact on rent levels.

Uniform Business Rate

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to exempt from the uniform business rate premises used by commercial fishermen, which are not used for processing, wholesaling or retailing, but simply for storing of equipment required for the work of providing fish for food consumption.

Mr. Chope: I have no plans to do so. Premises of this sort are liable to pay rates under the new business rate arrangements which came into force on 1 April, as they were under the previous rating system.

Homelessness

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what grant was made by his Department in respect of homelessness to *(a)* the Bayswater Hotel Homelessness project, *(b)* the British Refugee Council, *(c)* the Central London Housing Advisory Service *(d)* CHAR, *(e)* Community House Information Centre, *(f)* Empty Property Unit, *(g)* Homes for Homeless People,

(h) Housing Debtline, *(i)* National Association of Voluntary Hostels, *(j)* National Council for One Parent Families, *(k)* Specialist Information and Training Resource Agency and *(l)* Resource Information Service for Work on Homelessness, in each of the last three years; and what grant he is giving for the 1990-91 financial year.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This year we have trebled the funds available under section 73 of the Housing Act 1985 to £2 million. Comparing grants for individual bodies between this year and last is likely to be misleading because the nature of the programme has changed. In previous years, the emphasis was on providing core funding for voluntary bodies. This year, half the funds will go to a new national advice service based on citizens advice bureaux with specialist assistance from Shelter and SHAC; and half to specific projects providing direct assistance and practical help to single homeless people.

Of the organisations funded under section 73 in previous years, substantial increases in the level of grant have been made to Shelter and SHAC. Shelter will receive a 400 per cent. increase from £144,490 in 1989-90 to £454,554 in 1990-91. SHAC will receive a 200 per cent. increase from £199,439 in 1989-90 to £407,236 in 1990-91. Increased grants are also being offered to Housing Advice Switchboard, the London Diocesan Fund and the Bristol Cyrenians but final details have yet to be agreed. Organisations receiving section 73 grant for the first time are: WECVS, Centrepoint, Riverpoint Single Homeless Ltd., the Hillingdon project, Portsmouth Housing Trust, St. Basil's centre, Birmingham, Newark (Nottingham) Young Single Homeless Trust, Leicester night shelter, Brighton Housing Trust, Housing Aid for Youth, National Foster Care Association, Lodgers, Chester lodging support project, Key House, The Passage, St. Martins-in-the-Fields social care unit, Thames Reach, Threshold, St. Vincent's hostel, North Lambeth day centre, London Connection, Coventry Day Centre for the Homeless Ltd., Reading emergency accommodation project and Resource Information Service. Detailed offers will shortly be agreed with these bodies.

Grant in each of the last three years to the organisations listed by the hon. Member was:

	1987-88 £	*1988-89* £	*1989-90* £
Bayswater Hotel Homelessness Project	12,000	13,840	15,390
British Refugee Council	10,590	21,400	21,230
Central London Housing Advisory Service	12,760	17,000	16,865
CHAR	34,630	36,200	35,920
Community House Information Centre	11,870	14,000	13,890
Empty Property Unit	18,430	27,300	27,080
Homes for Homeless People	29,680	31,000	30,750
Housing Debtline	30,414	32,500	32,250
National Association of Voluntary Hostels	21,630	22,600	22,435
National Council for One Parent Families	21,990	22,970	23,010
Specialist Information and Training Resource Agency	—	25,000	24,780
Resource Information Service	26,700	34,000	33,545

Of these bodies, only Resource Information Service has been offered grant this year; details are yet to be agreed.

Nature Conservancy Council

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment by what amount funding to the Nature Conservancy Council has increased since 1979.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Grant in aid to the Nature Conservancy Council has risen from £7·9 million in 1979-80 to £44·069 million in 1990-91. This is an increase in real terms of 159 per cent. The council has also been allocated an additional £750,000 this year to meet its costs arising from the proposed reorganisation of the conservation agencies.

Toxic Waste

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what effects the European Council decision on waste management and reduction will have upon his present toxic waste policy.

Mr. Trippier: The European Council resolution of April 11 on waste policy sets a framework for the future development of Community policy in this area. It supports waste minimisation through the use of clean technology and clean products and the maximum possible use of recycling. For unavoidable waste arisings, it calls for pre-treatment and high environmental standards for final disposal. The resolution also refers to the desirability of members states aiming for self-sufficiency in waste disposal and calls for an adequate network of disposal facilities across the Community. As such, the resolution is generally consistent with the Government's policies on waste and consequently was strongly supported by the United Kingdom.

Pollution

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when and where he expects the joint European Environment Council—eastern European COMECON Environment Ministers meeting on atmospheric pollution, nuclear safety and environmental protection to take place.

Mr. Trippier: The Irish Government, as President of the European Council, will be hosting a meeting of Community Environment Ministers with their counterparts in eastern and central European countries in Dublin on 16 June.

County Hall

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to make an announcement on the development proposals for County hall.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: After I have carefully considered the inspector's report.

Hedges

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration he is giving to introducing a statutory protection for valuable and ancient hedges, along the same lines as that recognised in relation to ancient monuments and trees.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Our current review of tree preservation policies and legislation is also considering matters relating to hedgerows.

Rain Forest (Conference)

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department will be represented at the International Timber Organisation conference on strategies to help save the rain forest to be held in Bali in May.

Mr. Forth: I have been asked to reply.

Officials from my Department and the Overseas Development Administration are representing the United Kingdom at this meeting.

Fur Production

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what regulations exist in terms of *(a)* cage size, *(b)* access to natural light and *(c)* diet for animals in factory units for fur production; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I have been asked to reply.

There are at present no legal requirements relating specifically to the welfare protection of fur-bearing animals. However, the Agriculture (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1968 makes it an offence to cause livestock on agricultural land unnecessary pain or distress and the Protection of Animals Act 1911 makes it an offence to cause unnecessary suffering to any captive or domestic animal.

Welfare standards for fur-bearing animals are currently being negotiated in the Council of Europe and are expected to be implemented subsequently within the European Community.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Training

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many young people received employment training in Northern Ireland during the years January 1987 to December 1988; and what percentage of those on completion of their training went to *(a)* jobs, *(b)* self-employment, *(c)* full-time education, and *(d)* full-time training other than employment training.

Mr. Needham: It is assumed that the hon. Gentleman is referring to the youth training programme (YTP).

In 1987 12,076 and in 1988 12,067 young people entered full-time training under YTP. Information on YTP leavers, whose destinations were known, from full-time training provision is:

	percentage to jobs	*percentage to full-time education and training*	*percentage to unemployment*
1987	54	5	41
1988	61	5	34

These figures include the destinations of young people who leave YTP prematurely. Separate figures are not available for young people who went to self-employment and these are included in the percentage who went to jobs.

Birth Control

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what development of family planning advisory facilities has taken place in the constituency of Strangford during the past five years.

Mr. Needham: There have been no developments of family planning services in Northern Ireland in the last five years due to fully comprehensive family services having been available free of charge throughout Northern Ireland. Since 1975 most family doctors and two community clinics in the Strangford constituency provide these services. In addition, patients can, if they wish, attend family planning clinics in other areas.

Civil Service Premises

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who owns the premises at Maryfield in which the Irish civil servants are based.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 17 May 1990]:* The premises at Maryfield are the property of the Crown.

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the expenditure on energy consumption, broken down by fuel, of the buildings occupied by his Department, for the latest year available.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 10 May 1990]:* The information in respect of the Northern Ireland Departments and the Northern Ireland Office for 1988-89 is as follows:

	£ million
Electricity	5·419
Oil	2·09
Gas	0·308
Coal	0·008
TOTAL	7·825

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the energy consumption, broken down by fuel, of the buildings occupied by his Department for the latest year available.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 30 April 1990]:* The information in respect of the Northern Ireland Departments and the Northern Ireland Office for 1988-89 is as follows:

	Gigajoules
Electricity	340,118
Oil	777,916
Gas	57,566
Coal	5,274

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Vietnamese Boat People

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list by detention centre in Hong Kong, the number of Vietnamese boat people held, on the latest date for which he has figures.

Mr. Maude: As at 17 May 1990, there are 11 detention centres in Hong Kong with a total population of 43,974.

Centre	*Population*
Green Island	299
Hei Ling Chau	3,290
Chi Ma Wan	1,878
Whitehead	22,185
Cape Collinson	323
Argyle Street	1,495
High Island	6,815
Lowu	399
Shek Kong	5,295
Nei Kwu	627
Shek Kwu Chau	999
Victoria Prison and other Institutions	369

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement in respect of the attempted escape by Vietnamese boat people at the Whitehead detention centre in Hong Kong on 3 May.

Mr. Maude: During the early hours of 29 April, 102 Vietnamese boat people, some armed, escaped from the Whitehead detention centre in a well-planned breakout. Five people were apprehended almost immediately and 39 were arrested within 24 hours of the escape. The police have continued to make arrests but a total of 56 people are still missing. On 4 May, police officers and correctional services staff conducted a large scale search of the Whitehead detention centre to find and remove dangerous weapons. More than 2,500 weapons were removed from the centre and 187 people moved to other institutions. The search took place against a background of intimidation by gangs of other boat people, assaults on staff, armed escapes and the widespread possession of offensive weapons. These are serious offences which could not be ignored. The Hong Kong Government are determined to maintain the rule of law inside the detention centres and searches at the centres will continue.

El Salvador

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the findings of the Scotland Yard detectives sent to El Salvador to investigate the killings of six Jesuit priests; and when a full report will be made public.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Scotland Yard team went to El Salvador at the request of President Cristiani. Its report will be sent to the Government of El Salvador. It will be for the Salvadorean authorities to decide on future action, including publication.

European Commission

Mr. Tom Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many British citizens are currently employed by the European Commission; and if he will classify them by grade.

Mr. Maude: The latest information shows that the European Commission employs 990 British citizens—409 A (administrative) grade, 179 B (executive) grade, 217 C (clerical and secretarial) grade, nine D (manual) grade and 176 L (linguistic) grade. Similar information for other institutions is being sought and a further reply will be given as soon as possible.

Baltic States

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government have any plans to use the bilateral mechanism under the CSCE process to discuss with the Soviet Government the applicability of principle VIII of the Helsinki Final Act "Equal Rights and Self-Determination of People" to the Baltic states; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have on several occasions made clear to the Soviet Government that a solution to the present dispute must be reached through dialogue. This should lead to a settlement acceptable to both sides, which will allow the Lithuanian people to decide their own future. We do not at present plan to raise Lithuania under the CSCE mechanism.

Sri Lanka

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Government of Sri Lanka about the murder of one of the country's Members of Parliament and its implications for human rights.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have not raised with the Sri Lankan Government the specific case of the murder of Mr. Sam Tambimuttu. But we have consistently made clear our concern at the level of violence and human rights abuses in Sri Lanka.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Magistrates

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, in relation to the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980 and offences committed under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act and any of the relevant statutory provisions within the meaning of section 53 of the said Act, if he has any plans to amend the Magistrates' Courts Act to empower magistrates to refer corporations to a higher court for sentencing.

Mr. John Patten: Paragraph 3.15 of the White Paper "Crime, Justice and Protecting the Public" (Cm. 965) states that the Government intend to amend section 38 of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980, in line with the proposed new statutory framework for sentencing, so that the court's decision is based on the seriousness of the offence. That would replace the present provision whereby the decision of the court depends on information about the offender's character and antecedents, and which does not apply to corporations.

Ethnic Monitoring

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether comprehensive ethnic monitoring is to be extended to prison officers and police officers along the lines of that proposed for the probation service, and broken down by grade.

Mr. Mellor: For the prison service, consideration is being given to a further statistical survey of ethnic origin, by grade, on broadly similar lines to that proposed for the probation service. Home Office circular 87/1989—"Equal Opportunities Policies in the Police Service"—recommended that ethnic monitoring arrangements should be established for police officers. Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary is monitoring the information provided in response to that recommendation.

Parole System

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will delay the implementation of the recommended changes in the parole system outlined in "Crime, Justice and Protecting the Public" until after the publication of Lord Justice Woolf's inquiry into the prison disturbances.

Mr. Mellor: No.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the annual crime detection rates for all crimes and for violent crimes for each year since 1978.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested for 1978 to 1988 is published in table 2.17 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, 1988" Cm 847, and for 1989 in table 6 of Home Office statistical bulletin 10/90. Copies of both these publications are available in the Library.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were *(a)* the total number of crimes and *(b)* the number of violent crimes in Wales in each year from 1978.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested for 1978 to 1988 is published in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales", in table 32 for the years 1978 to 1979 and in table 2.5 for the years 1980 to 1988; and for 1989 in table 7 of Home Office statistical bulletin 10/90. Copies of these publications are available in the Library.

Probation Orders

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek powers to enable day centres operated by the probation service to offer the initial introduction to employment training for persons subject to a section 11(4b) probation order.

Mr. John Patten: We have already agreed arrangements with the Training Agency for integrating day centre attendance with the youth training scheme. We are now considering whether similar arrangements might be extended to employment training. Home Office officials will be meeting the Training Agency in the near future to discuss this possibility.

Ames Glover

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on the steps being taken to solve the case of missing baby Ames Glover; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the police have assigned a full investigative team, consisting of 12 officers, to investigate this case. They will continue to make every effort to trace the whereabouts of Ames Glover.

Immigration

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the present whereabouts of 670 immigrants detained on the Earl William in 1987 by *(a)* those granted permission to remain in the United Kingdom, *(b)* those returned to their state of origin, *(c)* those in the United Kingdom, case under consideration and *(d)* those whose whereabouts are unknown.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information is not readily available in the form requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Trafalgar Square (Incident)

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to how many of the mounted officers involved in the disturbances in London on 31 March were involved in the charge in Trafalgar square.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I am advised by the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that 25 mounted officers were deployed to disperse the demonstrators in Trafalagar square during the disturbances on 31 March.

Political Asylum

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have sought political asylum in the United Kingdom in each of the last 10 years; and how many have been granted asylum.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The available information is given in the table. Further information on applications for, and grants of, refugee status in 1980-88 is published in Home Office statistical bulletin issue 25/89 "Refugee Statistics United Kingdom 1988", a copy of which is in the Library. The bulletin for 1989 will be published later in the summer.

Applications for refugee status in the United Kingdom, and grants for refugee status, 1980-89.

Number of persons

Year	*Applications received*	*Grants[1] of refugee status*
1980	2,352	1,147
1981	2,425	1,473
1982	4,223	1,727
1983	4,296	1,185
1984	3,869	649
1985	5,444	915
1986	4,811	565
1987	5,160	439
1988[2]	5,105	960
1989[2]	12,570	1,550

[1] Grants in a particular year do not necessarily relate to applications made in that year.
[2] Provisional figures.

Prison Escapes

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list, in numerical order by prison, the number of escapes from each English prison in 1989.

Mr. Mellor: The following table shows the number of prisoners reported as having escaped from within closed prisons in England in 1989:

Establishment	*Number*
Highpoint	28
Wymott	13
Ranby	9
Acklington	6
Aldington	6
Haslar	6
Featherstone	5
Northeye	5
Norwich	5
Stafford	5
The Verne	5
Channings Wood	4
Erlestoke House	4
Lindholme	4
Manchester	4
Canterbury	3
Dartmoor	3
Stocken	3
Durham	2
Haverigg	2
Oxford	2
Thorp Arch	2
Camp Hill	1
Hull	1
Leicester	1
Lewes	1
Nottingham	1
Pentonville	1

Public Relations

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total expenditure by his Department on press and public relations in 1979-80 and in each following year; and what is his latest estimate for the current year and budget for 1990-91.

Mr. Waddington *[holding answer 12 March 1990]:* The full cost of staff, accommodation and administration for the Home Office press office from 1979-80 to 1989-90 was:

	£
1979-80	283,140
1980-81	392,532
1981-82	381,799
1982-83	424,290
1983-84	516,362
1984-85	560,512
1985-86	606,996
1986-87	548,136
1987-88	599,282
1988-89	674,945
1989-90	715,646

The budget for 1990-91 is £822,471.

Note: The costs for 1979-80 are based on figures supplied by Her Majesty's Treasury. From 1986-87 costs have been calculated departmentally following the adoption of a system of devolved budgeting.

Prison Management

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will postpone the implementation of the management structure review of the prison service pending Lord Justice Woolf's report on the riots in Strangeways.

Mr. Mellor *[pursuant to his reply, 3 May 1990, c. 667]:* My right hon. and learned Friend has today written to the Prison Governors Association confirming that the reorganisation of the prison service will take place on the timetable which was announced on 11 January. A copy of his letter has been placed in the Library.

HEALTH

General Practitioners

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish a table showing for the latest available date for each of the regions of England how many general practitioners are *(a)* men and *(b)* women.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: At 1 October 1989 the figures were as follows:

Region	*Unrestricted principals*		
	Male	*Female*	*Total*
Northern	1,310	299	1,609
Yorkshire	1,548	386	1,934
Trent	1,905	478	2,383
East Anglia	883	184	1,067
North West Thames	1,393	604	1,997
North East Thames	1,531	494	2,025
South East Thames	1,521	446	1,967
South West Thames	1,151	413	1,564
Wessex	1,215	345	1,560
Oxford	1,025	305	1,330
South Western	1,561	347	1,908
West Midlands	2,193	522	2,715
Mersey	976	288	1,264
North Western	1,580	419	1,999

National Health Service Reform

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has as to how many ballots of staff and patients on the question of the formation of self-governing trusts have resulted in majorities in favour.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We are aware that ballots on the establishment of National Health Service trusts have taken place in a number of units, however, we have consistently made clear that it would not be appropriate or necessary for changes in management of National Health Service services to be subject to ballots. Applications for National Health Service trust status will not be invited until Parliament has approved the necessary legislation. Staff and the local community will then have an opportunity to express their views on individual proposals before any formal applications are made.

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence he has of the views of National Health Service staff or patients for the formation of self-governing trusts.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A total of 193 units have so far expressed an interest in NHS trust status, with some 80 indicating that they may seek trust status in 1991. This demonstrates the keen interest with which senior NHS staff, including members of the medical and nursing profession, view the prospect of establishing NHS trusts. However, applications for NHS trust status will not be invited until Parliament has approved the necessary legislation. Staff and the local community will then have an opportunity to express their views on individual proposals before any formal applications are made.

Hospices at Home

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement of the funding of the Hospice at Home organisation.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: For England, we have allocated an additional £8 million to health authorities this year to enable them to contribute more to voluntary hospices. The funding of individual projects is a matter for discussion between the organisations and authorities concerned. The funding of projects in Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Cataract Operations

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cataract operations were performed in 1989.

Mr. Dorrell: Health authorities in England reported 81,000 cataract operations in 1988-89.

Nurses and Midwives

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on current consideration of the pay and conditions of nurses and midwives in the National Health Service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The pay of nurses and midwives is determined in the light of recommendations from the independent pay review body for nursing staff, midwives, health visitors and professions allied to medicine. Conditions of service are a matter for the Nursing and Midwifery Staffs Negotiating Council and the general Whitley council.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced the Government's decisions on pay for staff in the clinical and education grades in 1990-91 on 1 February at columns *260-62*. The review body intends to make recommendations on pay levels for senior nurse managers in a supplementary report when the negotiating council has completed its review of the structure for these staff.

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he has received any recent representations from within the midwifery profession or from other organisations about the need for a career structure for midwifery managers;

(2) if he has made proposals regarding pay and grading structure for midwifery managers.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have received a small number of representations from senior midwives about the need for a new structure.

A joint working group of the Nursing and Midwifery Staffs Negotiating Council has recently concluded negotiations on a new structure for senior nurses and senior midwives. A final offer has been made to the staff side, who are currently consulting their members.

Community Care

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to ensure that local authorities have a duty to consult disabled people and their carers on their community care plans.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Government are currently examining ways of incorporating into the National Health Service and Community Care Bill a requirement for local authorities to consult service users and their carers on community care plans.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his Department's policy towards the role of small community hospitals as part of the community care policies of the Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Small hospitals can play a valuable part in providing a range of services where it is needed locally. They can be more accessible to both patients and staff alike and foster closer relations between local people and primary care services than do larger hospitals. District health authorities in determining the best pattern of services to meet local needs must weigh these benefits against those of larger district hospitals which can provide a full range of specialised treatment and help avoid uneconomic duplication of services on a number of different sites.

Ambulance Personnel, Cheshire

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the numbers of ambulance personnel employed in Cheshire in the years 1985-86, 1986-87, 1987-88, 1988-89, 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Mr. Dorrell: The available information is shown in the table. Figures for 1989, 1990 and 1991 are not available.

Ambulance staff (including officers) in post at 30 September each year
Cheshire county[1]

Years	*Whole-time equivalent*[2]
1985	330
1986	360
1987	360
1988	350

Source: Department of Health (SM13) annual census of non-medical manpower.

[1] All staff are based in the Chester District Health Authority.
[2] All figures are independently rounded to the nearest ten (10) whole-time equivalent.

Stepping Hill Hospital, Stockport

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about the staffing levels on geriatric wards at Stepping Hill hospital, Stockport.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The North Western regional health authority has set and published "Standards for Nursing Services" which includes standards for the management and staffing of wards and we understand that the Stockport health authority intends to apply all those standards. The authority continues to keep under review nurse staffing levels on the geriatric wards at Stepping Hill hospital, Stockport.

Community Health Councils (Monitoring)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the changes proposed in monitoring by community health councils, once the National Health Service is reorganised into an internal market with providers and purchasers.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The role of community health councils will remain fundamentally unchanged. District health authorities will be expected to take careful account of the views of their resident population on the overall pattern of service which they plan to secure through their contracts. CHCs will play an important role in this.

Mr. George Pawsey (Eviction)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the result of the investigations carried out by his Department into how a terminally ill pensioner, Mr. George Pawsey of Chelmsford was left to live in a garden shed after being evicted from his flat by Essex county council.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I understand that an inquiry into Mr. Pawsey's case is being conducted by Essex county council. The need for any action by the Department will be considered in the light of the outcome of that inquiry.

Sphygmomanometers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what reviews or legislation he is undertaking to ensure that sphygmomanometers satisfy the accuracy requirements of international recommendation No. 16—manometers for instruments for measuring blood pressure (sphygmomanometers); and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: A recent limited local survey suggested a high risk of inaccuracy beyond the standard laid down in the OIML international recommendation 16. The Department has asked for details of the survey to be provided and we look forward to receiving them. On the evidence currently available, however, we believe that the inaccuracies reported by the survey are more likely to arise from user error or misuse, or from inadequate maintenance or recalibration, than from faulty design or manufacture. The Department is therefore planning to update and reissue standing guidelines on use and

maintenance of sphygmomanometers. In addition, the British standards for mercury and aneroid instruments have recently been updated as a further point of reference and now reflect the international recommendation. EC directives are planned for implementation from January 1993 which will set minimum standards of essential requirements for marketing medical devices of this kind within the single European market.

Junior Hospital Doctors

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on his recent discussions with representatives of the junior hospital doctors.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Members for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) and for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) on 1 May at column *521*.

Charities

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which charities will receive assistance under section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968 in the current financial year.

Mr. Dorrell: For awards in 1989-90, I refer the hon. Member to the reply my hon. Friend the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health gave my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) on 24 April 1990 at columns *160-64*.

The full list of awards in 1990-91 will be published after the financial year has ended.

AIDS

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consideration his Department has given to the guide published by the Research Institute for Consumer Affairs and the Disabilities Study Unit entitled "Caring for Someone with AIDS"; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Department awarded the Research Institute for Consumer Affairs a grant of £8,000 towards the costs of compiling and editing this handbook for informal carers of people with AIDS or HIV infection. We value the role which informal carers play in the care of people with AIDS and hope that the handbook will help them in providing that care.

Genetic Passports

Mr. Dickens: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give consideration to the introduction of genetic passports for babies, using the biotab technique of a palm print of mother and baby at time of birth, as a means of proving the identity of a baby put up for adoption.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There are no plans to introduce such an arrangement. We are unaware of any difficulties arising in connection with uncertainties about the identity of children placed for adoption in the United Kingdom.

Pharmaceuticals

Sir Neil Macfarlane: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what advice he has received from the standing pharmaceutical advisory committee, the standing medical advisory committee and the standing nursing advisory committee and their joint sub-committee on original pack dispensing on the introduction of original pack dispensing for parmaceuticals in general, and for generic pharmaceuticals;

(2) whether it remains his policy to encourage the dispensing of pharmaceuticals in original packs; what action he proposes to take; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We consulted widely on the report and recommendations of the joint sub-committee and received a large number of comments. Progress on any systematic introduction of original pack dispensing has been delayed by the failure of the parties consulted to agree on any common standards for pack sizes.

Sir Neil Macfarlane: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will amend the Medicines Act to allow pharmacists to dispense pharmaceuticals in original packs of a size nearest to the quantity prescribed by the general practitioner.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have no present plans to issue a proposal for consultation since views expressed on the report of the joint sub-committee of the standing medical, nursing and midwives and pharmaceutical advisory committees have so far led to disagreement.

District Health Authorities

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which district authorities in the financial year 1989-90 in the north-west had to cut services in order to remain within budget.

Mr. Dorrell: In 1989-90, additional cash resources were made available to the North Western regional health authority amounting to about £88 million, which represented an increase of about 8·4 per cent. over the previous year. Taken together with about £19 million efficiency savings, this increase enabled service developments of £19·2 million to go ahead and meant that no district health authority needed to cut services to maintain a balanced budget.

British Generic Manufacturers Association

Sir Neil Macfarlane: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last formally met representatives of the British Generic Manufacturers Association; what issues were discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State met representatives of the association at their request on 8 November 1989. He discussed matters of mutual interest in relation to original pack dispensing. Any further action would now be a matter for the commercial judgment of individual companies.

Accident Units (Closure)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will bring forward legislation to place a statutory duty on a health authority, which intends to close an accident or casualty unit, adequately to advertise the proposed closure.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Community Health Councils Regulations 1985 provide that a district health

authority considering a substantial variation in the provision of health services has a duty to consult the community health council. The exception to this is when the authority is satisfied that, in the interests of the health service, a decision has to be taken without allowing time for consultation. In such a case, however, the authority is required to notify the community health council immediately of the decision taken and the reason why no consultation has taken place.

Guidance from the Department, in particular circular HC(IS)207, a copy of which is in the Library, sets out the procedures to be followed by health authorities in relation to the closure or change of use of health buildings. They are advised to consult a number of organisations including local authorities, recognised staff organisations, family practitioner committees, local advisory committees and local medical committees, as well as community health councils.

We would expect a district health authority to satisfy itself that it had made adequate provision both for dealing with accidents and emergencies and for publicising locally any substantial changes to those arrangements.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Children's Rights

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take steps to ensure that the Government honour United Nations and European conventions on the right of all children to education.

Mr. Jackson: The legal obligations upon the Government, local education authorities and parents in this country are such as to ensure that the provisions of United Nations and European conventions to which we are party are met.

Lip-reading Classes

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many representations he has received concerning national provision for lip-reading classes; if he will list, by region, the authorities in England that provide lip-reading classes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. Friend has not received any representations concerning national provision for lip-reading classes. It is for local education authorities to assess the local demand for lip-reading classes. The Government do not collect information centrally on the availability of classes in lip-reading.

Civics

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the provision of civics as part of the national curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: The National Curriculum Council has identified citizenship as a major cross-curricular theme, and will shortly issue guidance to schools on its incorporation into the curriculum.

School Pupils (Suspension)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has, by local education authority for the last 12 months, and by ethnic origin, on the number of pupils suspended from school distinguishing between *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools.

Mr. Alan Howarth: This information is not centrally available. Under the recently introduced national exclusions reporting system, the Department is requesting information on all cases of permanent exclusion from maintained schools over the next two years. The information being requested includes the ethnic origin of the pupils concerned, who will not be identified.

Higher Education Corporations

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what monitoring his Department is conducting of appointments of *(a)* independent governors, *(b)* local authority nominees, *(c)* academic nominees and *(d)* others to higher education corporations.

Mr. Jackson: None. While initial appointments of higher education corporation governors were made by my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State, all subsequent appointments are entirely a matter for the corporations themselves, or their independent members, within the comprehensive and carefully constructed provisions of schedule 7 to the Education Reform Act 1988.

Assisted Places

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much has been spent on the assisted places scheme and for how many pupils in each year of the scheme from its inception, to the latest available year in cash, and in constant prices and with an index related to the expenditure in constant prices where the first year equals 100.

Mr. MacGregor: The information requested is as shown in the table and relates to England only. The figures for Wales are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Year	*Pupil numbers (academic year)*	*Cash cost (£ million)*	*Real cost (£ million)*	*Real cost Index*
1981-82	4,185	3·0	3·0	100
1982-83	8,616	8·7	8·1	271
1983-84	13,102	15·0	13·4	446
1984-85	17,386	22·2	18·9	629
1985-86	21,412	29·6	23·7	791
1986-87	24,478	37·9	29·5	982
1987-88	26,899	46·0	34·4	1,146
1988-89	27,083	50·9	35·9	1,196
1989-90	27,008	56·5	36·9	1,232

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the average cost per pupil of an assisted place in each year of the scheme from its inception, to the latest available year.

Mr. MacGregor: The average cost per pupil of an assisted place is as follows:

Financial year	*Cost per pupil £*
1981-82	1,098
1982-83	1,267
1983-84	1,303

Financial year	Cost per pupil £
1984-85	1,482
1985-86	1,603
1986-87	1,759
1987-88	1,952
1988-89	2,121
1989-90	[1]2,329

[1] Subject to final adjustment.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table showing for each year of the scheme since its inception to the latest available year the number of assisted places available, the number taken up, and the percentage of those taken up which were free places.

Mr. MacGregor: The information requested is given in the table:

Academic year	Places available	Places taken up	Percentage of free places
1981-82	5,446	4,185	37
1982-83	11,058	8,616	37
1983-84	15,866	13,102	36
1984-85	20,699	17,386	38
1985-86	25,210	21,412	37
1986-87	29,295	24,478	36
1987-88	33,228	26,899	34
1988-89	33,217	27,083	32
1989-90	33,268	27,008	31

TEMPUS

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on United Kingdom participation in the TEMPUS scheme.

Mr. Jackson: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) on 8 May 1990 at columns *41-42*.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what assessment he has made of the effect of differences in policy and practice between publicly funded institutions of higher education in the United Kingdom and those in other European Community countries, in respect of tuition fees for non-European Community students, on opportunities for United Kingdom institutions of higher education to participate in the TEMPUS scheme;

(2) what action he proposes to take to compensate United Kingdom institutions of higher education in respect of tuition fees for students from non-European Community countries under the TEMPUS scheme.

Mr. Jackson: The United Kingdom is not alone among Community member states in charging tuition and other fees to non-EC students. Against that background the Government are discussing with the Commission how fees may best be dealt with under the TEMPUS programme, with a view to ensuring full participation in the programme by United Kingdom institutions.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has on institutions of higher education in other European Community countries preparing courses of engineering and business management in English in order to meet the preferences of non-European Community students under the TEMPUS scheme.

Mr. Jackson: I have no detailed information. But I understand that some institutions in member states such as the Netherlands have introduced courses for overseas students and their own nationals which are conducted in English. It may be expected that in future the number of such courses will increase, whether under the TEMPUS programme or otherwise. Such developments, recognising the growing status of English as a world language, are to be welcomed, though within the Community only by studying in the United Kingdom or the Republic of Ireland can students benefit from opportunities to study not only in English but alongside students whose language is English.

Student Loans

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions he has had with interested parties on the administration of the access funds established by the Student Loans Act; and when he expects to publish the details of the administration of the access funds.

Mr. Jackson: Access funds, which will be established by my right hon. Friend by virtue of his powers under the Education Reform Act 1988 and the Education Act 1944, were the subject of consultation papers issued to interested parties last year. Since then, officials have had discussions with representatives of the institutions, the Universities Funding Council, the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council and local authorities. Additionally officials have participated in conferences and seminars organised among the institutions themselves.

Statements of conditions of payment and notes of guidance have been sent to the chairmen of the governing bodies of maintained further education colleges and chief education officers, and to the two funding councils. Copies of these documents have been placed in the Library of both Houses. It falls to the two funding councils to draw up statements of conditions of payment and guidance notes on the access funds for their institutions.

National Curriculum Council

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a list of the committees presently established by the National Curriculum Council, the number of members of each committee known to be practising school teachers and the proportion of such members within the total membership of each committee.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information requested is set out in the following table:

Committee	Number of practising teachers	Proportion of such members to total Per cent.
Whole curriculum	3	19
National curriculum A	5	29
National curriculum B	4	25
Professional development	3	21
Curriculum review	2	15

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will state his responsibilities and policy towards securing that practising school teachers are represented among the membership of *(a)* the National Curriculum Council and *(b)* committees established by the National Curriculum Council.

Mrs. Rumbold: Section 14(2) of the Education Reform Act 1988 requires that appointments to the National Curriculum Council

"shall include persons having relevant knowledge or experience in education".

My right hon. Friend makes appointments on a personal, not a representative basis. He seeks to appoint members who between them have wide-ranging knowledge and experience in education. He is also concerned that there should be some members with knowledge and experience of the business world. Two of the current members are practising head teachers; others have had teaching experience.

The National Curriculum Council is responsible for determining membership of its committees.

Higher Education (Inspections)

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his answer of 15 May to the hon. Member for Bridgend, *Official Report*, column *363-64*, if he will give details of each request received from the management of any independent institute of higher education for an inspection by Her Majesty's inspectors, showing the name of the institution, the purpose of the inspection, its result, its cost and by whom this was borne, for the period 1986 to date.

Mr. Jackson: There have been no such requests.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the banning by local education authorities of British meat from school meals in the interests of children's health in view of concern over bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has circulated advice and guidance about bovine spongiform encephalopathy to all local authorities and the chief medical officer has clearly stated that British meat is safe. My right hon. Friend hopes that education authorities will take full account of that advice in considering the provision of British meat in school meals.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Central and Eastern Europe

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what the Government are doing to encourage investment in central and eastern European countries;

(2) what special help the Government are giving through export guarantees or other means to encourage British exporters to central and eastern European countries.

Mr. Redwood: The Department of Trade and Industry is doing its best to keep up to date with changes in the legal and fiscal framework for business in each of the countries of central and eastern Europe and is disseminating this information to interested companies. In addition, the Department seeks to make available to British business information on specific export and investment opportunities in those countries; and to encourage them to take full advantage of the assistance offered by the United Kingdom know-how fund as well as schemes of assistance operated by the EC and multilateral institutions.

The Export Credits Guarantee Department also assists and encourages exporters and investors. Export credit guarantees to encourage British exports to central and eastern Europe are available to the extent considered justifiable for particular markets within ECGD's normal underwriting criteria. The position is kept under regular review. Also, as recently announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, ECGD is prepared to consider applications to cover from United Kingdom concerns wishing to invest in those countries under its investment insurance scheme.

Auditors

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will seek to amend paragraph 2(a) of section 390 of the Companies Act 1985 to require that the auditor's notice of resignation, if accompanied by a statement of circumstances, be addressed to members, creditors and employees.

Mr. Redwood: I assume that the hon. Gentleman has in mind the statement of circumstances mentioned in section 394 of the Companies Act 1985, which has been inserted into that Act, in substitution for section 390, by section 123 of the Companies Act 1989.

I have no plans for further legislation on these matters. Section 394 provides that the statement must be sent to the registrar of companies. If the statement concerns matters which the auditor considers should be brought to the attention of members or creditors of the company, then it must also—subject to provisions enabling the company to challenge such a statement in the courts—be sent to every person entitled under section 238 of the Companies Act 1985 to be sent copies of the accounts. These provisions enable appropriate publicity to be given to an auditor's statement.

Unpublished Reports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby of 26 February, *Official Report*, columns *16-17*, on unpublished reports, what was the cost of producing each report.

Mr. Redwood: Costs to date of investigations, other than those conducted by departmental officers, which are not separately identifiable, are as follows:

Company name	*Date of report*	*Cost (£)*
Euroseas Securities Limited	5 March 1985	399,741
Alexander Howden Group plc	[1]30 December 1985	
	[2]26 June 1987	1,055,700
British Anzani plc	28 November 1986	184,353
Medway Secondary Metals Limited	21 October 1987	88,934
House of Fraser Holdings plc	23 July 1988	1,512,485
Guinness plc	[1]24 November 1988	1,699,008
Aldermanbury Trust plc	[1]20 December 1988	726,176

Company name	Date of report	Cost (£)
Consolidated Goldfields plc	[1]13 January 1989 [1]5 April 1989	1,076,527
Graylaw Holdings Limited Link Service Stations Limited	28 November 1989	287,083
Bank Street Securities Limited	28 November 1989	157,088
Pennine Commercial Holdings plc	[1]28 November 1989	338,372
The Animal Defence Society Limited	31 December 1989	55,562
Minet Holdings plc	[2]16 January 1990	
WMD Underwriting Agencies Limited	[3]24 July 1986	1,244,077

[1] Interim.
[2] Final.
[3] Interim published.

USSR

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many representations he has received concerning the effect of political reforms in the USSR on the textile trade in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: None. Textiles trade between the USSR and the EC is governed by a bilateral agreement negotiated last year and running till the end of 1992. This complements the general trade and co-operation agreement negotiated at the same time and replaces the previous regime, which imposed autonomous quotas on USSR exports.

Pirate Radio

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about the future of both offshore and land-based pirate radio in Britain in the light of the Broadcasting Bill.

Mr. Forth: It remains Government policy to take vigorous action against unauthorised broadcasters, whether based offshore or inland. It is essential to keep the airwaves clear for the emergency services and for the wider variety of legitimate broadcasting that we aim to foster. That is the purpose of the new enforcement provisions in the Broadcasting Bill.

Iraq

Mr. Caborn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his answer of 15 May, *Official Report*, column *365*, of the trade delegations that visited Iraq with Government support in 1989-90, 1988-89, 1987-88 and 1986-87, what size of companies, by Her Majesty's Government criteria of size, made up each delegation.

Mr. Redwood: Companies are separated into three groups by number of employees. The relevant figures (where available) are:

	1-49	50-200	200+	n/a	Total
1986-87					
4 groups	13	15	53	32	113
1987-88					
4 groups	7	5	38	4	54
1988-89					
3 groups	20	11	44	7	82
1989-90					
6 groups	26	39	88	4	157

Mr. Caborn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his answer of 15 May, *Official Report*, column *364*, which sectors of Iraqi industry or Government Ministries participated in the British Government-supported inward missions in 1988-89 and 1989-90.

Mr. Redwood: The 1988-89 inward mission organised by the Federation of British Electrotechnical and Allied Manufacturers Associations consisted of participants from the Iraq state organisation for electricity.

The 1989-90 inward mission organised by the Association of British Healthcare Industries consisted of specialists from various hospitals and other medical services.

Mr. Caborn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his answer of 15 May, *Official Report*, column *365*, of the trade delegations that visited Iraq with Government support in 1989-90, 1988-89, 1987-88 and 1986-87, how many companies have been on more that one delegation; and how many on more than two delegations.

Mr. Redwood: During the years covered by the question 24 companies have been supported more than once and 42 have received support more than twice.

Monopolies and Mergers Commission

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he proposes to publish the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the bid for Dixons plc by Kingfisher plc.

Mr. Redwood: The report will be published and the Secretary of State's decision announced as soon as is practicable.

Exporters (Promotion Services)

Mr. Irvine: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what changes have been made as regards the promotion services available to United Kingdom exporters.

Mr. Redwood: More than 21,000 people involved in exporting now hold DTI service cards. Our market research shows that the services we provide are much appreciated by exporters. The changes we are introducing will help us to provide those services in the ways that are most helpful to exporters by improving the presentation and content of reports and by making it easier to get access to our publications.

The market information inquiry service provides reports from any of the 190 Foreign and Commonwealth Office posts around the world, in response to inquiries from United Kingdom exporters. Charges were introduced for this service for the first time on 1 April 1989. I recognise it is important to present reports in a fully professional way and to ensure that consistently high standards are met by our staff in answering inquiries.

The changes that are being made ensure that the minimum standards of presentation and content are met and that work is carried out within specified periods. This will mean that the business man knows what he is getting when he commissions a report from us. Changes have also been made to the charges for this and other services. Details of the charges that apply from 1 June are set out in the table.

The aim of the changes to the market information inquiry service and the export representative service is to reflect more closely the work involved in answering inquiries. In some cases, for example where an export representative service case for certain countries can be completed with fewer than 24 hours' work, the charge will be less than at present. Some readily available information will be provided free. In other cases fees will increase.

Charges from 1 June

	£
Market information inquiries (inc VAT)	
Market information held by post (readily available information may be provided free)	30
Up to four hours work	60
More than four hours and up to eight hours work	120
More than eight hours work	180
Export representatives service (inc VAT)	
Up to 24 hours work	300
More than 24 hours work	600
New products service (inc VAT)	
Per article for 15 markets	60
Publications (not subject to VAT)	
"Hints to Exporters" visitor's guide	5 each
Country profiles	10 each
Sector reports	30 each

For the first time a catalogue of publications available from the Department, including those which attract a charge and those which are available free is being published. This will detail in full all the publications, notably sector reports, available to exporters containing invaluable information about overseas markets.

The export publications catalogue will also list five publications jointly produced by the export promotion organisations of the United Kingdom, France, Spain, Italy and Belgium. The publications are in a new series called "Setting up in Business In . . . . . " which will guide firms in the five countries on the business and legal background to establishing a presence in five markets of the Pacific Rim: Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and South Korea. The series will be continued at the end of 1990 with similar booklets on five markets of South America.

Recycling

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received expressing concern at the extension to textiles of the three arrow symbol used to denote recycled materials; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 17 May 1990]:* I have received letters from the International Wool Secretariat, the Confederation of British Wool Textiles Ltd. and, more recently, from the chairman of the all-party wool textiles group about the three arrow symbol.

I have no plans to force the use of the ISO-registered symbol on any product. Its use, or otherwise, is a matter for individual companies to decide for themselves.

WALES

Ministerial Duties

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) which Ministers will deal with developments regarding hospital closures during the indisposition of the Under-Secretary;

(2) how ministerial responsibility for the various subject areas will be shared within his Department during the period of indisposition of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State.

Mr. David Hunt: No change in ministerial responsibility is necessary. My hon. Friend is continuing his duties from his sick bed. I have encouraging reports on his progress.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he proposes to impose a surcharge on local authorities levying a high poll tax in Wales.

Mr. Grist: No.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he proposes to exempt from the poll tax elderly or infirm persons cared for by their families at home;

(2) if he proposes to introduce banding upwards for the poll tax in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The Government are reviewing the operation of the community charge system. It is too early to say what changes might be made.

Mayors

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he proposes to introduce directly elected mayors in local government in Wales.

Mr. Grist: We have no plans for such a proposal.

Capital Formation

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each year since 1979 the value of gross domestic fixed capital formation in cash and constant prices for *(a)* the Welsh economy as a whole, *(b)* energy and water supply, *(c)* manufacturing, *(d)* transport and communication and *(e)* dwellings.

Mr. Grist: Gross domestic fixed capital formation figures for the Welsh economy as a whole are not available. The information requested for industry groups *(b)* to *(e)* at current (cash) prices, is given in the following table. Constant price data are available only for the United Kingdom as a whole.

Gross Domestic Fixed Capital Formation

(£ million)

	Energy and water supply	*Manufacturing*	*Transport and communication*	*Dwellings*
1979	228	442	115	322
1980	215	384	136	385
1981	300	365	127	358
1982	277	344	121	358
1983	209	334	129	436
1984	170	437	116	494
1985	185	548	136	468
1986	194	514	141	547
1987	163	652	179	653

Source: Regional accounts, Central Statistical Office.

River Taff (Pollution)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales who is responsible for cleaning up the banks of the River Taff in Cardiff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: This is a matter for the riparian owners.

Brymbo Steelworks Closure

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has proposals to assist the workers made redundant as a result of the closure of the Brymbo steelworks at Wrexham.

Mr. David Hunt: At Gwydyr house on Wednesday 16 May, I met with a delegation, led by the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek), of representatives of the Brymbo work force, the community, and local authorities. I then met, separately, with the owners of Brymbo steelworks. As a result of the meetings, United Engineering Steel Ltd. has agreed to have immediate discussions with the Welsh Development Agency about the options open to the company for the future of the steelworks at Brymbo.

Urban Aid

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will announce his decisions regarding all urban aid applications submitted to him in respect of the current financial year, listing for each county *(a)* all approvals given and the authority through which the application was made together with the figure offered and the figure applied for and *(b)* all applications refused and the figure applied for.

Mr. Grist: I assume that the hon. Gentleman is referring to the capital grants to voluntary youth services, village halls and community centres programme.

The programme for 1990-91 was notified to the local education authorities on 11 May. The table gives the information requested. All approved projects have been offered grant for the full amount sought.

The time scale for the issue of invitations to local education authorities to submit applications and for the announcement of decisions is designed to meet the needs of applicants at all stages, but it is kept under review.

For each project approved under the programme, the Welsh Office allows a period of three years for the work to be undertaken and grant claimed. The later announcement of approvals for 1990-91 should not therefore jeopardise completion of these projects within this timespan. But if there were problems carry-over arrangements exist and could be used in appropriate cases.

Clwyd local education authority

Project/work	*LEA Grant*	*WOED Grant*
A. *Youth projects*		
Clwyd county girl guides—phase II of new training centre.	25,000	50,000
1st Marchwiel and Pentre Maelor scouts—provision of new HQ.	8,000	16,000
B. *Community projects*		
Llandegla memorial hall—new roof, toilets and extension.	9,125	18,250
Trefnant village hall—rewiring, new roof, shower facilities	3,000	6,000
Broughton war memorial hall—new heating system.	1,500	3,000
Overton playgroup—remodelling of disused canteen for use as a community centre.	4,750	9,500
Stiwt arts/leisure community centre—renovation of miners' institute.	25,000	50,000
Totals	76,375	152,750

Dyfed local education authority

Project/work	*LEA Grant*	*WOED Grant*
A. *Youth projects*		
Llanelli centre project—purchase of building, extension and refurbishment.	15,000	30,000
Carmarthen scout group—re-roofing of existing building.	1,000	2,000
B. *Community projects*		
Talgarreg village hall—repairs to existing building.	13,150	26,300
Ffynnonwen community centre—re-roofing of centre.	4,198	8,396
Tysul village hall—refurbishments and repairs to hall.	4,950	9,900
Simpsons cross activity group—erection of village hall.	6,250	12,500
Carew memorial hall—provision of kitchen facilities.	1,746	3,492
Whitland community centre—renovation of toilets, rendering and new windows.	10,000	20,000
Boncath YMCA—erection of new hall.	7,000	14,000
Cwmgwili welfare association—new roof, cladding and provision of kitchen/toilet facilities.	2,950	5,900
Gwynfe community hall—renovation and extension to existing building.	2,158	4,316
St. Dogmaels memorial hall—new extension and re-roofing of existing building.	25,000	50,000

Project/work	LEA Grant	WOED Grant
East Williamson hall—installation of toilet facilities.	1,814	3,628
Alma community centre—new roof and windows.	3,000	6,000
Llansaint village hall—erection of new hall.	6,583	13,165
Totals	104,799	209,597

Dyfed local education authority

Rejected Projects

Project/work	LEA Grant	WOED Grant
Community projects		
Eglwys Fach church hall—new roof.	625	1,250
Tregaron hall—new roof and provision of fire exit.	5,000	10,000
Llangadog community centre—new roof and windows.	2,500	5,000
Camrose community centre—refurbishment and re-wiring.	825	1,650
Newport memorial hall—repairs to stage and provision of exits.	825	1,650
Rhydlewis village hall—rebuild exterior wall and interior decoration.	1,094	2,188
Brynberian village hall—renovation of former school to provide community facilities.	3,375	6,750
Coracle hall, Llechryd—new floor.	2,362	4,724
Llanboidy market hall—new floor.	2,775	5,550
Trelech community centre—new heating system.	878	1,756
Amroth village hall—repairs and renovation to existing hall.	5,000	10,000
Ddraig Goch village hall—new roof.	1,875	3,750
Ferryside village hall—new roof and renovations to interior.	2,145	4,290
Llangathan village hall—re-plastering exterior walls.	375	750
Totals	29,654	59,308

Gwent local education authority

Project/work	LEA Grant	WOED Grant
A. *Youth projects*		
1st Gilwern scout group—new HQ.	11,828	23,656
Ringland youth and boys' club—emergency lighting, fire doors and heating system.	1,444	2,888
B. *Community projects*		
Sir John Herbert memorial hall, Llanover—new roof, kitchen extension and replace electrical system.	4,906	9,812
Whitebrook village hall—new roof, windows, doors and electrical system.	7,717	15,434
Totals	25,895	51,790

Gwynedd Local Education Authority

Project/work	LEA Grant	WOED Grant
A. *Youth projects*		
Aelwyd yr Urdd, Blaenau Ffestiniog—re-roofing.	2,250	4,500
Caernarfon scouts—repairs to HQ.	2,750	5,500
Bala guides—construction of HQ.	4,250	8,500
Caernarfon guides—repairs to HQ.	1,300	2,600
B. *Community projects*		
Penisarwaun community hall—phase II of building extension.	17,750	35,500
Talwrn village hall—rebuilding hall entrance.	550	1,100
Rhosirwaun village hall—new floor.	1,125	2,250
Llanfairpwll village hall—replacement ceiling and new heating system.	900	1,800
Llaingoch community hall—new windows.	812	1,624
Maesywaen hall—new roof and windows.	5,375	10,750
Penygroes memorial hall—last phase of refurbishment, including new toilets.	6,000	12,000
Pwllheli community hall—new floor, heating system and windows.	8,400	16,800
Llanfaelog community centre—toilet and kitchen facilities.	3,500	7,000
Eglwysbach village hall—kitchen facilities/extension.	5,000	10,000
Blaenau Ffestiniog community centre—eradication of dry rot.	12,500	25,000
Totals	72,462	144,924

Mid Glamorgan Local Education Authority

Project/work	LEA Grant	WOED Grant
Miskin campsite (scouts)—phase II of sewerage works.	1,290	2,580
Porth YMCA—refurbishment and remodelling interior to provide a modern youth club.	23,142	46,284
Totals	24,432	48,864

Powys Local Education Authority

Project/work	LEA Grant	WOED Grant
A. *Youth projects*		
1st Presteigne scout group—new scout hut.	5,335	10,670
B. *Community projects*		
Llanigon village hall—construction of new village hall.	25,000	50,000
Llandeilo Graban village hall—conversion of old school into a village hall.	7,500	15,000
Totals	37,835	75,670

South Glamorgan Local Education Authority

Project/work	LEA Grant	WOED Grant
A. *Youth projects*		
29th Cardiff scout group—new HQ	25,000	50,000
Cardiff north west girl guides—new windows and facia boards.	550	1,110
1st Llantwit Major girl guides—purchase of freehold.	836	1,672
B. *Community projects*		
Llandough and Leckwith institute—extension to existing building.	9,500	19,000
Cathays Methodist church—redevelopment to extend provision for youth and community facilities.	7,000	14,000

Project/work	LEA Grant	WOED Grant
Totals	42,886	85,772

Development Agencies (Property Sales)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will indicate, for each year of the existence of the Welsh Development Agency and Mid Wales Development, the amount of cash raised in sales of property and factories.

Mr. Grist: The value of capital sales by the two development agencies since their inception has totalled £92·4 million (including land) at 31 March 1990.

The table provides a breakdown of this figure in the form requested.

Total value of capital sales (including land) as at 31 March 1990

Year	WDA £000	DBRW £000	Total £000
1976-77	200	Nil	200
1977-78	600	10	610
1978-79	646	19	665
1979-80	1·056	12	1·068
1980-81	1·328	15	1·343
1981-82	4·623	763	5·386
1982-83	4·651	912	5·563
1983-84	4·497	582	5·079
1984-85	11·318	1·037	12·355
1985-86	6·570	1·625	8·195
1986-87	8·544	1·707	10·251
1987-88	8·061	2·635	10·696
1988-89	8·134	2·735	10·869
1989-90	17·820	2·352	20·172
Grand total	£78·048	£14·404	£92·452

Gwynedd Health Authority

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on how many occasions in the past 12 months the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State with responsibility for health has visited either the headquarters or one of the hospitals of Gwynedd health authority, on what duties and for what purpose.

Mr. Grist: I have not made any such visits during the past 12 months, though I have met the chairman of the authority on three occasions during that period in London and south Wales.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether any items of expenditure of Gwynedd health authority during 1989-90 were met by his Department from funds other than those identified as provision for the revenue or capital expenditure of that authority.

Mr. Grist: Detailed information relating to the expenditure of the Gwynedd health authority in 1989-90 will not be available until after 30 June, which is the due date for the submission of the authority's annual accounts.

In 1988-89, £315,266 of the expenditure recorded in the authority's accounts was incurred on an agency basis on behalf of the Department and funded as such rather than as part of the authority's revenue and capital provision. This comprised the following items:

	£
Health and personal social services research and development	21,512
Cost of free issue of dried baby milk and vitamins; the sale of baby milk at reduced prices, and the purchase of welfare vitamins	82,488
Patients travelling expenses	20,427
Payments for expenditure incurred for the mental handicap strategy	190,839
	315,266

Source: Gwynedd health authority accounts for 1988-89.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many members there will be of the Gwynedd health authority after the reorganisation planned for later this year and who will appoint these members.

Mr. Grist: The exact composition of the membership is dependent on Royal Assent being obtained to the National Health Service and Community Care Bill and the consequent laying of new membership regulations. It is proposed that the membership will include: a chairman and five members all appointed by the Secretary of State, one of whom will be drawn from the University of Wales; the chief officer of the authority; the director of finance, the chief administrative medical officer/director of public health medicine; and the chief administrative nursing officer. It is further proposed that the chairman, the chief officer and the five members appointed by the Secretary of State may appoint one additional officer of the authority if they wish.

District Nurse Service

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the number of district nurse service contacts with persons aged 65 years and over in each district health authority area in Wales, per 1,000 population aged over 65 years in that area, together with the corresponding figure for Wales as a whole for the most recent available year.

Mr. Grist: The latest available information is given in the table:

Number of persons treated by district nurses at least once during 1988, aged 65 and over per 1,000 population aged 65 and over.

Health Authority	Numbers
Clwyd	276·9
East Dyfed	148·0
Gwent	172·2
Gwynedd	196·4
Mid Glamorgan	408·8
Pembrokeshire	160·3
Powys	385·9
South Glamorgan[1]	381·1
West Glamorgan	235·7
WALES	272·9

[1] 1987 figures have been used as 1988 data are not available and the available data used to calculate Wales figures.

Casualty Services

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each district health authority in Wales the full casualty hospitals and the minor casualty hospitals/clinics currently in use.

Mr. Grist: The following hospitals, as at 31 December 1989, recorded attendances under the categories "Accident and Emergency Departments" and "Minor Casualty Units":

Health Authority	*Accident and emergency departments*	*Minor casualty units*
Clwyd	Ysbyty Glan Clwyd Ysbyty Maelor	HM Stanley Colwyn Bay community Denbigh infirmary Ruthin Holywell Flint Mold Chirk Llangollen
East Dyfed	Bronglais West Wales general Llanelli	Aberaeron Cardigan Tregaron Llandovery
Gwent	Nevill Hall Royal Gwent	Abertillery Blaenavon Blaina Ebbw Vale Monmouth Tredegar Pontypool County Mount Pleasant
Gwynedd	Llandudno Ysbyty Gwynedd	Stanley Sailors Caernarfon Cottage Madoc Bryn Beryl Ffestiniog Dolgellau Tywn
Mid Glamorgan	Princess of Wales East Glamorgan Llwynpia Mountain Ash Prince Charles Caerphilly Miners Redwood	Bridgend general Maesteg Aberbargoed Aberdare
Pembrokeshire	Whithybush	Tenby South Pembrokeshire
Powys	Brecon War Memorial	Llandrindod Wells Builth cottage Ystradgynlais Machynlleth chest Llanidloes Victoria Memorial Montgomery county infirmary
South Glamorgan	Cardiff royal infirmary	Barry community
West Glamorgan	Morriston	Singleton Gorseinon Neath Clydach

Computerisation

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 11 May, *Official Report*, column *262*, if he will give the reasons for the reduction by £500,000 of the contract with the IBM Corporation, United Kingdom, agreed to in August 1986 for the computerisation of his Department's management information system.

Mr. Grist: There have been no reductions. It is anticipated that further payments for maintenance and services will be made during the lifetime of this project, bringing total payments to approximately £1·6 million.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) whether any software subcontractor employed by IBM UK for the computerisation of the Welsh Office management information system was removed from the contract between August 1986 and 1 April 1990;

(2) which software subcontractors were employed by IBM UK under the contract of August 1986 with the Welsh Office for the computerisation of its management information system.

Mr. Grist: These are matters for IBM UK Ltd.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) whether he has sent a report to the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency on the final settlement of the contract awarded in April 1986 to IBM to computerise his Department's financial management system;

(2) whether he has forwarded any advice to the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency on the tendering procedure followed for the computerising of departmental financial management systems.

Mr. Grist: The CCTA has been fully informed of all matters relating to the contract with IBM UK Ltd.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will be making any further report to the National Audit Office on the conclusion of the contract awarded to IBM UK in April 1986 to computerise the financial management system in his Department.

Mr. Grist: We have made no reports to NAO as there is no requirement for us to do so. The Department's records are available for NAO's inspection in the normal way.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether any payments were made to any software subcontractor employed by IBM UK for the completion of the contract of August 1986 for the computerisation of the Welsh Office management information system.

Mr. Grist: Our Department made no payments to software subcontractors employed by IBM UK Ltd.

Homelessness

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list *(a)* the grants made by his Department to voluntary organisations working in the field of homelessness in Wales, in each of the last three years and *(b)* grants he is giving for the 1990-91 financial year.

Mr. Grist: Since 1987-88, the Department has given grant aid to three voluntary organisations in Wales, in pursuit of the Government's policy of tackling homelessness on a strategic level. Supplementary allocations from other housing programmes have been given in each of the last three financial years to these three bodies and to a number of smaller local projects in need of financial assistance.

The figures for 1987-88 to 1990-91 are given in the following table, with the additional allocations identified separately:

	Original allocation	*Supplementary grant*
1987-88		
Shelter	36,180	11,350
Welsh Women's Aid (WWA)	12,700	57,000
Swansea Accommodation for the Single Homeless (SASH)	4,120	29,000
Shortlife Housing Association	—	1,500
Cardiff Flatshop	—	1,500
Welcare Llandaff	—	1,500
Wallich Clifford Community	—	1,500
Cardiff Cyrenians	—	1,500
Cardiff Single Women's Housing Group	—	1,500
1988-89		
Shelter	37,600	15,000
Welsh Women's Aid (WWA)	37,584	19,827
Swansea Accommodation for the Single Homeless (SASH)	15,808	—
Cardiff Flatshop	—	1,983
Cardiff Single Women's Housing Group	—	1,345
1989-90		
Shelter	59,115	11,495
Welsh Women's Aid (WWA)	41,832	29,027
Swansea Accommodation for the Single Homeless (SASH)	35,591	2,515
Cardiff Flatshop	—	3,347
Cardiff Single Women's Housing Group	—	1,157
Shortlife Housing Association	—	680
Anastasia Housing Project	—	—
Ty Glyn Housing Society Ltd.	—	3,344
1990-91		
Shelter	114,684	—
Welsh Women's Aid (WWA)	63,286	—
Swansea Accommodation for the Single Homeless (SASH)	71,150	—

Orthopaedic Services

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what have been the percentage trends in the latest available three successive quarters for the trading list for orthopaedic treatment for outpatients in Ysbyty Gwynedd.

Mr. Grist: The latest available information, which relates to outpatients seen in the specialty of traumatic and orthopaedic surgery, is given in the table:

Outpatients seen at Ysbyty Gwynedd

	New	*Total*
Quarter ending 30 June 1989		
Number seen	1,071	3,210
Percentage change over previous quarter	−4·4	−0·6
Quarter ending 30 September 1989		
Number seen	1,018	3,251
Percentage change over previous quarter	−4·9	+1·3
Quarter ending 31 December 1989		
Number seen	999	3,172
Percentage change over previous quarter	−1·9	−2·4

Community Hospital Beds

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment has been made by his Department of the needs over the next 10 years for community hospital beds in each part of Wales; how this need will be met by the National Health Service and the private sector respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The requirement for community hospital beds is for district health authorities to determine in conjunction with family practitioner committees and other interests, and in the light of local needs and available resources. Local strategies for health, which are to be submitted to the Department by December 1991, will provide the context for a long-term review of requirements.

Health Care Expenditure

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing for each of the district health authorities in Wales for the most recent available years, the total expenditure, capital and revenue, on health care services per head of population.

Mr. Grist: I would refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) on 30 January 1990.

Health Visitors

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing for the most recent available date, the number of health visiting service contracts made with people per 1,000 population aged 65 years and over, in each of the district health authority areas of Wales, and for Wales as a whole, and if he will express the figure for each area as an index against the Welsh average taken as 100.

Mr. Grist: The latest available information is given in the table:

Number of persons seen by the health visiting service at least once during 1988, aged 65 and over per 1,000 population aged 65 or over

Health authority	*Number*	*Index (Wales = 100)*
Clwyd	48·6	65·6
East Dyfed	63·7	86·0
Gwent	52·1	70·3
Gwynedd	17·3	23·3
Mid Glamorgan	98·3	132·7
Pembrokeshire	44·6	60·2
Powys	136·5	184·2
South Glamorgan[1]	91·1	122·9
West Glamorgan	114·3	154·3
Wales	74·1	100·0

[1] 1987 figures have been used as 1988 data are not available and the available data used to calculate Wales figures.

Casualty Services

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will seek to amend the law to ensure that statutory responsibility to deal with accident or casualty services rests clearly with district health authorities.

Mr. Grist: The provision of hospital staff, accommodation and ambulance services for use with accident and

emergency services is already the responsibility of district health authorities by virtue of section 3(1) of the National Health Service Act 1977 and the NHS Functions (Directions to Authorities and Administrative Arrangements) Regulations 1989.

Health Authorities (Asset Sales)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of the capital receipts from the sale of their assets district health authorities can use for capital or revenue expenditure without requiring specific authorities from the Welsh Office.

Mr. Grist: District health authorities retain, without reference to the Department, income from the sale of vehicles and other equipment. They are entitled to receive the proceeds from the sale of land and buildings no longer needed by the Health Service except in those cases where the property has become surplus as a result of a closure following the provision of a centrally funded scheme. In such cases the sale proceeds will not be kept by the district health authority but will benefit the all-Wales provision. Health authorities may use the proceeds of sale for the provision of hospital and community health services for which they are responsible.

Children's Hospital Services

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received concerning the closure of the children's ear, nose and throat hospital in Ely, Cardiff.

Mr. Grist: We have not received any representations about the possible closure of the children's ENT hospital in Ely, Cardiff, since we approved the broad thrust of South Glamorgan health authority's strategic plan in July 1989.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what are the most up-to-date guidelines for children requiring long-term orthopaedic treatment being accommodated in mixed-intake children's wards;

(2) what proposals he has for the reduction of cross-infection risks in mixed-intake wards for children requiring long-term orthopaedic in-patient treatment.

Mr. Grist: These are matters for district health authorities within the general guidance that children should be nursed on paediatric wards.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he has any plans to visit the children's ear, nose and throat hospital in Ely, Cardiff.

Mr. Grist: Not at present.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what is the current waiting list for ear, nose and throat operations for children within each Welsh health authority and within Wales as a whole for *(a)* out-patient treatment and *(b)* in-patient treatment;

(2) what were the waiting lists for ear, nose and throat operations for children for each health authority within Wales and for Wales as a whole in 1984, 1986 and 1988;

(3) what were the waiting lists for tonsil and adenoids removal operations for children for each health authority within Wales and for Wales as a whole in 1984, 1986 and 1988; and what is the current waiting list.

Mr. Grist: Information both on the number of patients on waiting lists for individual operations and on the age of patients is not collected centrally. Total in-patient waiting lists figures for the ear, nose and throat specialty are given in the following table. Out-patient waiting lists relate only to appointments, and not to operations, and are not included in these figures.

	1984	*1986*	*1988*	*1989*
Pembrokeshire	0	0	0	0
Clwyd	1,073	998	1,550	1,066
East Dyfed	543	967	478	562
Gwent	883	681	634	702
Gwynedd	242	275	551	848
Mid Glamorgan	2,731	2,535	1,997	2,242
Powys	0	0	0	0
South Glamorgan	1,449	1,283	930	634
West Glamorgan	403	815	1,056	1,099
Wales	7,324	7,554	7,196	7,153

Note:—At 30 September each year.

Hospital Closures

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will issue guidelines for consultation on hospital closure proposals for those hospitals and specialised wards in which a high proportion of the patients come from outside the boundaries of the health authority and extend the consultation procedure to involve those community health councils from which significant numbers of their patients originate.

Mr. Grist: Appropriate guidance is already available in Welsh Office Health Service planning paper 5, appendix B.

Hospices

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many hospices there are in each of the counties of Wales; and what is his policy regarding the expansion of the hospice provision in Wales.

Mr. Grist: There is one voluntary hospice in Wales providing in-patient care, in south Glamorgan. The provision of hospice facilities and other care for the terminally ill is a matter for the voluntary sector and health authorities but we are considering what assistance we can give to aid this work.

A487

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his latest information concerning the specification for a Llanllyfni bypass on the A487 trunk road; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Gwynedd county council is carrying out a feasibility study of possible options for improvements between Caerau and Llanwnda which includes Llanllyfni and a draft report has been submitted to the Department for consideration.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is *(a)* the purpose and *(b)* the cost of the road reconstruction which has been undertaken over recent weeks on the A487 trunk road between Felinheli and Caernarfon, in the vicinity of Griffith's Crossing; and what criteria determined the timing of this work.

Mr. Grist: The reconstruction works, costing £247,130 are necessary to strengthen the trunk road and maintain it in a safe condition. Timing was influenced by the need for reasonable weather conditions while avoiding the peak holiday months of July and August.

Hospitals (Transitional Arrangements)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has for transitional arrangements for the period 1 April 1991 to 1 April 1993 for health authorities in respect of those hospitals and specialised wards in which a high proportion of the patients come from outside the boundaries of the health authorities.

Mr. Grist: From 1 April 1991 district health authorities will be funded to meet the needs of their resident populations rather than those of the wider catchment areas they serve. The services provided by hospitals will be paid for under service agreements negotiated with health authorities and GP fund-holding practices on behalf of their patients. Thus hospitals receiving patients from outside the district in which they are situated will in future receive funds from the district health authorities or, where appropriate, the general practitioner fund-holding practices, covering the respective patients' areas of residence.

In 1991-92, district health authorities will be funded to enable them to meet the costs of anticipated patient flows across boundaries. It is expected that these anticipated flows will broadly reflect the existing pattern of cross-boundary movements of patients and will in any case represent the agreements reached in the course of this year between health authorities, general practitioner fund-holding practices and the providing hospitals. We do not therefore expect to see patients disadvantaged, or individual hospitals or specialist services made unviable, simply because of the new funding arrangements that will be introduced next April.

In due course, district health authorities' revenue funding will reflect their weighted population share of available resources—which may be more or less than the shares based on their residents' use of services which, as I have described, will be the basis of funding in 1991-92. There will be a process of transition to weighted capitation funding in order to allow authorities and hospitals time to adjust—either by considering new ways of providing services or by improving efficiency. It is not yet possible to say how long this period of transition will take since the starting point for transitional arrangements will not be determined until authorities produce data on anticipated cross-boundary flows and since the methodology for calculating weighting population shares will not be determined until authorities have been consulted. These matters will be resolved during the autumn and transitional arrangements will then be mapped out when the district health authorities' allocations for 1991-92 and their resource planning assumptions for subsequent years are published in December and January respectively.

Special Needs Housing

Mr.Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he proposes to make changes to the funding arrangements for special needs projects undertaken by housing associations in Wales and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist *[pursuant to his reply, 20 April 1990, c. 1057-58]:* We have now reassessed requirements and expect to incur expenditure of £33,000 up to the end of June. Pending parliamentary approval of the necessary revised estimate for class XVII, vote 6, this expenditure will be met by repayable advances from the Contingencies Fund. Further advances may be required for expenditure in July.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment and Youth Training Initiatives

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to deregulate and privatise his Department's employment and youth training initiatives; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My aim is to ensure that the private sector has a leading role in training and enterprise programmes and that burdens on business are kept to a minimum. I have recently completed the sale of the Skills Training Agency and announced plans that private voluntary bodies will take the place of five of the statutory industry training boards. I am now establishing a network of training and enterprise councils (TECs) which will be private sector companies operating as employer-led partnerships in their local communities. TECs will run training and enterprise programmes, including ET and youth training, previously administered by the Department of Employment. TEC contracts will allow considerable flexibility to adapt programmes to meet the needs of local employers and individuals.

Restart

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the purpose and status of current experiments with restart menus, including options courses; and if he will list which experiments are taking place in which areas.

Mr. Nicholls: The main opportunities offered at restart interviews remain:

- submission to a job vacancy
- a place on a job club
- a place on employment training
- a place on a restart course
- a place on the enterprise allowance scheme

There are no plans to experiment with this range of opportunities, although additional opportunities may be available in particular localities. However, employment service managers may arrange for variations in the delivery of the main opportunities in order to meet local needs.

Minimum Wage

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which member countries of the EC have no system of legally enforcing a minimum wage for their labour force.

Mr. Eggar: All EC member states have arrangements for enforcing minimum rates of pay in some or all sectors of their economies.

TVEI

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether there are any plans to scale down the technical and vocational education initiative.

Mr. Nicholls: We are currently reviewing the timetable for entry of local education authorities into TVEI. The scale and long-term funding of the initiative remains the same.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if, pursuant to the reply he gave to the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim), *Official Report*, column *170* of 24 April, he will give the total estimated expenditure on TVEI in each of the years 1990-91 to 1997-98, inclusive, and for Scotland, England and Wales in both cash and real terms.

Mr. Eggar: As laid out in the public expenditure White Paper the Department plans to spend £134 million in 1990-91, £133 million in 1991-92 and £141 million in 1992-93 on TVEI.

The remaining balance of around £393 million will be spent between 1993-94 and 1997-98.

Liverpool

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the Minister of State's recent official visit to Liverpool.

Mr. Eggar: I recently carried out a long-standing engagement to visit Liverpool, to see at first hand the Government's training schemes and initiatives for the long-term unemployed in operation.

I paid a visit to a JIG (job interview guarantee scheme) pilot and was very impressed by the schemes being run by Post Office Counters Ltd.

This was followed by a visit to Monks Ferry Training Trust, a provider of employment training and youth training, where I had discussions with representatives of the local community.

Married Women

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has about the number of married women in the United Kingdom and regarding the number who undertake domestic duties in the home and have no paid employment.

Mr. Nicholls: Preliminary results from the labour force survey for spring 1989 show that there were in the United Kingdom, 11,241,000 married (or cohabiting) women of working age, 16-59 years old. Of these 3,903,000 had no paid employment, comprising 466,000 who were unemployed (using the international definition based on a four-week job search period) and 3,437,000 who were economically inactive. Among the latter group some 70 per cent. (an estimated 2,430,000 women) further reported that their main reason for not seeking work was that they were looking after the family or home.

Skill Centres

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many copies of the information memorandum were issued by Deloitte Corporate Finance on the Skills Training Agency; how many organisations tendered for the skill centres either in part or in whole; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 15 May 1990]:* Deloitte Corporate Finance issued more than 100 copies of the information memorandum about the Skills Training Agency (STA).

The Government were pleased with the number of expressions of interest received, which covered every unit in STA.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have been or will be redundant from the network of skill centres due to the sale of the centres to Astra Training Services and other companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 15 May 1990]:* I intend to close those parts of STA not included in the sale packages agreed with successful bidders and the staff in those parts will, as far as possible, be redeployed. I expect that there will be some redundancies among instructional and industrial grade staff, but the number is not yet known.

Staffing levels in the parts of STA which have been sold to the private sector are a matter for the new purchasers, but most purchasers have made it clear that they will need to restructure the businesses so as to secure commercial viability. I understand that one purchaser, Merseyside Education Training and Enterprise Ltd. (METEL), has declared redundancies with effect from 15 May.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on his meeting on 10 May with their employers about the deaths of workers on the channel tunnel project.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 15 May 1990]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 15 May to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist), *Official Report*, columns. *403-4*.

Action Credit

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the changes made to the three action credit pilot schemes since their introduction.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 18 May 1990]:* The weekly earnings limit for participants has been raised from £43 to £75 to allow greater flexibility and the pilot has been extended for three months.

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what the role of training and enterprise councils and the employment service will be in promoting and administering action credit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 18 May 1990]:* When the action credit pilots have been completed and evaluated it will be for each training and enterprise council to decide whether they wish to operate such a scheme in their area. They will be responsible for administering any scheme and for negotiating locally with the employment service about its role.

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when a statement will be made on whether

action credit will be extended beyond its current pilot schemes; and what are the criteria by which the success of these pilots is being judged.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 18 May 1990]:* The final evaluation report is due in November. The results will be made available to training and enterprise councils and it will be for them to decide whether to introduce schemes in their area.

The evaluation includes interview surveys of actual and potential participants and of employers.

Significant criteria for success will be the extent to which action credit is successful in helping ET leavers into full-time employment or self-employment, and in helping them to obtain a job reference.

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give a detailed account of the moneys his Department and the employment service have spent, and are projected to spend, in connection with the piloting of action credit.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 18 May 1990]:* To date expenditure on the pilot of action credit for those leaving employment training is £61,319·51. The projected total expenditure on administering and monitoring the pilots is £100,025. A further £24,725 is projected for the independent evaluation currently under way.

The cost to the employment service of market research into the feasibility of an action credit pilot targeted at those unemployed for 12 months or more is £35,466. The employment service has no immediate plans to spend further money on action credit.

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate the percentage and number of action credit participants who on leaving the scheme have (i) found employment and received the bonus, (ii) have signed off without finding permanent work and received the bonus and (iii) have continued to claim income support.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 18 May 1990]:* No. This information will be available after the action credit pilot is completed at the end of August.

Employment Training

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received on the possibility of the Spastics Society withdrawing from employment training as a result of cuts in funding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 18 May 1990]:* The Spastics Society informed my Department on 2 May of its intention to withdraw from employment training with effect from the end of May 1990.

Arrangements are being made to place its trainees with other providers.

Youth Training

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received *(a)* on the possible closure of the major provider of special needs youth training in the Tower Hamlets and Newham area and *(b)* from the careers service concerning the youth training guarantee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 18 May 1990]:* I have received no representations on the particular case referred to by the hon. Member, nor from the careers service about the guarantee.

Training Agency area offices are currently negotiating funding levels with training providers in respect of the youth training programme which commences on 29 May 1990. Under youth training, the Government's guarantee remains unaffected. All young people under the age of 18 who have left full-time education and who are unable to find a job, are guaranteed the offer of a training place on the programme.

Training Organisations

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of applications from ET training managers for approved training organisation status which have been *(a)* rejected on the first five criteria, *(b)* rejected on the last four criteria and *(c)* rejected by the Training Agency.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 14 May 1990]:* Only those training managers who are considered to have the potential to meet the stringent standards entailed in the award of approved training organisation status are given contracts to provide employment training. The approval process involves a constructive partnership between the Training Agency and the training manager to build provision which meets these standards. Rejections are made only when it becomes clear there is no prospect of achieving this.

For those training managers who began operations at the start of employment training, the assessment process is under way and as at 30 April 1990, it has proved necessary for the Training Agency to reject only one training manager who failed on the first five criteria.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of applications from training agents for approved training organisation status which have been *(a)* rejected on the first five criteria, *(b)* rejected on the last four criteria and *(c)* rejected by the Training Agency.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 14 May 1990]:* Only those training agents who have the potential to meet the stringent quality standards entailed in the award of approved training organisation status are given contracts to provide employment training. The approval process involves a constructive partnership between the Training agency and the Training Agent to build provision which meets these standards. Rejections are made only when it becomes clear there is no prospect of achieving this.

For those training agents who began operations at the start of employment training, the assessment process is under way and as at 30 April 1990, it has not proved necessary for the Training Agency to reject any training agents.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of ET training managers who have received Training Agency approval for each of *(a)* the first five criteria and *(b)* the last four criteria set out in the approved training organisation process.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 14 May 1990]:* The approved training organisation process involves a

constructive partnership between the Training Agency and the training manager to build provision which meets the stringent standards entailed in the approved training organisation award. Training managers have two years from the date of commencement of their employment training operation to meet these standards which are tested in two stages. The assessment process for those who began on 5 September 1988 is currently under way and as at 30 April 1990, 873 have received Training Agency approval for the first five criteria and three have received approval for the last four criteria.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total number of ET training agents who have received Training Agency approval for each of *(a)* the first five criteria and *(b)* the last four criteria set out in the approved training organisation process.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 14 May 1990]:* The approved training organisation process involves a constructive partnership between the Training Agency and the training agent to build provision which meets the stringent standards entailed in the approved training organisation award. Training agents have two years from the date of commencement of their employment training operation to meet these standards which are tested in two stages. The assessment process for those who began on 5 September 1988 is currently under way and as at 30 April 1990, 153 have received Training Agency approval for the first five criteria. None so far has received approval for the last four criteria.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Taxes and Benefits

11. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many taxpayers face a marginal deduction rate of 70 per cent. or more as a result of the interaction of the tax and benefit system.

Mr. Newton: There are around 320,000 tax units paying income tax with a marginal deduction rate of over 70 per cent. The social security reforms and subsequent changes to national insurance have effectively eliminated the risk of facing combined deductions for taxes and benefits which exceed each extra pound earned.

17. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his latest estimate of the number of people who lose 90p or more in every pound of increased earnings as a result of the interaction of the tax and benefit system.

28. **Mr. Eadie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his latest estimate of the number of people who lose 90p or more in every pound of increased earnings as a result of the interaction of the tax and benefit system.

Mr. Newton: Before the reforms 70,000 families had marginal deduction rates over 100 per cent., and 130,000 had rates over 90 per cent. Now nobody has a rate of 100 per cent. or more, and the number over 90 per cent. has fallen to 40,000.

23. **Mr. Bidwell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his latest estimate of the number of people who lose 90p or more in every pound of increased earnings as a result of the interaction of the tax and benefit system.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: It is estimated that there are about 40,000 benefit units where the head is in full-time employment and faces a combined marginal tax-benefit withdrawal rate of 90 per cent. or more.

60. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many taxpayers face a marginal deduction rate of 70 per cent. or more as a result of the interaction of the tax and benefit system.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: It is estimated that there are about 320,000 benefit units where the head is in full-time employment, pays income tax and faces a combined marginal tax-benefit withdrawal rate of 70 per cent. or more.

Occupational Pensions

13. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what new measures are being introduced to protect members of occupational pension schemes.

Mr. Newton: The current Social Security Bill includes measures to appoint a pensions ombudsman; reduce self-investment by schemes; extend the rights of early leavers; and provide, from a date to be appointed, for annual increases in respect of pension rights derived from future service and for scheme surpluses to be used to make increases in respect of existing rights. These are further important steps forward in safeguarding the position of the members of such schemes.

16. **Mr. Leigh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what powers the pensions ombudsman is proposed to have to resolve any grievances held by members of occupational pension schemes.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) on 2 April at column *488*.

Computerisation

14. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how he anticipates his Department's computerisation programme will benefit social security claimants.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Computerisation has improved the speed and accuracy with which benefit claims are handled. It provides a better service to the public on inquiries. It has enabled us to move benefit processing work out of London to areas where it is easier to recruit and retain good staff—and so provide a better service to our London customers.

57. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what progress has been made in implementing his Department's operational strategy.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Department's highly complex £1·7 billion strategy for the computerisation of the social security payment system is proceeding as planned. The pilot exercise in 23 local offices has been

completed and the systems are being introduced nationally office by office. By 4 May 1990, 226 offices had received the departmental central index (DCI) system; 225 the retirement pensions system; and 119 the income support system—out of an eventual target of 440 offices.

Lone Parents

15. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any plans to assist lone parents living on benefits to be able to move into work or training.

25. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any plans to assist lone parents living on benefits to be able to move into work or training.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The benefit system already contains a number of special provisions to help lone parents who wish to work. Regular payments of maintenance can also provide a valuable stepping stone from benefit to work. We are currently reviewing the maintenance system to see what improvements are needed.

22. **Ms. Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much a lone parent with two children would have to earn to be better off in work than on benefits, making an appropriate assumption about the costs of child care.

42. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much a lone parent with two children would have to earn to be better off in work than on benefits, making an appropriate assumption about the costs of child care.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer the hon. Members to the reply given to the hon. Members for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) and for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) earlier today.

49. **Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any plans to assist lone parents who are not living on benefits to obtain maintenance from the absent parent.

55. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any plans to assist lone parents who are not living on benefits to obtain maintenance from the absent parent.

56. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any plans to assist lone parents who are not living on benefits to obtain maintenance from the absent parent.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Absent parents have a clear legal responsibility to maintain their families wherever they can afford to. The Government have announced an inter-departmental review of the maintenance system to see what changes need to be made to the way in which maintenance is awarded and paid. A survey of the work in a sample of courts and DSS local offices is under way to provide full and up-to-date information as a basis for deciding on the best way forward, and this information will relate both to benefit and non-benefit cases. We are also examining systems in use in other countries to see what lessons can be learned from them. The Government aim to bring forward proposals later this year.

In the shorter term we have taken action to improve the payment and enforcement of maintenance under the current system. These measures will help lone parents who want to move from benefit to independence, since maintenance can provide valuable extra income to supplement earnings. Some two thirds of lone parents are dependent on income support. We have strengthened the basis on which local offices assess absent parents' ability to pay maintenance and have improved our instructions on interviewing lone parents about the identity of the absent father. We have also introduced a new clause to the current Social Security Bill to expand our ability to take action and address some of the problems lone parents have experienced with the current system. In particular the new clause will enable an order obtained by the Department to be transferred to the lone parent leaving benefit, removing the need for her to go to court to obtain a private maintenance order. DSS will also be able to enforce a lone parent's maintenance order for her when payments are not being made in full, if the lone parent is claiming income support for herself and her family. This will ensure that prompt action is taken in all cases and will reduce the chance of the absent parent getting into the habit of non-payment.

50. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest estimate he has as to the number of lone-parent families in receipt of income support; and how many also receive family credit.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: At May 1988 some 722,000 lone-parent families were in receipt of income support of whom some 6,000 were also in receipt of family credit. (The figures do not include prisoners' partners). At December 1989 there were 120,000 lone-parent families in receipt of family credit; information is not available on the number also in receipt of income support. There is a limited overlap between income support and family credit because an award of family credit lasts for six months.

Sources: Income Support Annual Statistical Inquiry 1988; Family Credit Statistical System.

Absent Fathers

18. **Mrs. Roe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what measures are being taken to make the arrangements for recovering maintenance from absent fathers more effective; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I am currently examining the maintenance system and aim to bring forward proposals for change later this year. In the meantime I have taken a number of steps to improve the recovery of maintenance under the current system. This includes a new clause introduced to the present Social Security Bill which will improve our ability to pursue maintenance.

Social Fund

20. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what recent representations he has received on the operation of the social fund.

29. **Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what recent representations on the operation of the social fund he has received.

Mr. Scott: Representations on all aspects of the social fund have been received from hon. Members, members of the public and various organisations.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many social fund applications have been reviewed since the High Court's decision relating to his guidance on local office budgets; and how many additional payments have resulted.

33. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many social fund applications have been reviewed as a result of the High Court's decision on his guidance on local office budgets; and how many additional payments have resulted.

64. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many social fund applications have been reviewed since the High Court's decision on his guidance on local office budgets; and how many additional payments have resulted.

Mr. Scott: Between 1 March 1990 and 30 April 1990, a total of 27,000 applications for review were processed by local offices. A total of 593 were requests for a further review in the light of the High Court decision, and resulted in 473 full or partial awards totalling £144,400.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many local social security offices have had their social fund budgets reduced in *(a)* 1990-91 and *(b)* 1989-90, in cash terms and in real terms.

48. **Mr. John P. Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many local social security offices had their social fund budgets reduced in *(a)* 1990-91 and *(b)* 1989-90, in cash terms and in real terms.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is as follows:

	1989-90	*1990-91*
Cash terms	184	0
Real terms[1]	429	252

[1] Real terms prices as reckoned by the gross domestic product deflator.

The figures compare allocations at the beginning of the relevant financial year with those at the beginning of the preceding year.

Income-related Benefits

21. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by how much spending on income-related benefits for families with children has changed since April 1988.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Since April 1988 we have provided over £350 million extra help in real terms to families with children receiving income-related benefits.

Income Support

24. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what changes have occurred in the last year in the quality of service to claimants of income support; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: There have been significant improvements in the quality of service provided to claimants of income support during the past 12 months. For example, the average time taken to clear income support claims improved by 4 per cent. (to 4·7 days) whilst the error rate fell by 13 per cent. (from 9·1 per cent. to 7·9 per cent.).

In addition, the service provided in London is being improved by relocating work which does not require face-to-face contact away from 21 London offices to areas where recruitment and retention of staff is easier. There is already substantial evidence that significant improvements in accuracy, clearance times and quality of service are being made.

The programme to computerise income support, which was implemented in 95 local offices in 1989-90, and will be extended to all offices by 1991, is bringing major improvements in service to the public enabling staff to process claims more accurately and quickly.

Pensioners' Incomes

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of pensioners are receiving income from *(a)* savings or *(b)* occupational pensions.

45. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of those pensioners who have recently retired are receiving income from occupational pensions or savings; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The latest available figures show that, in 1987 73 per cent. of recently retired pensioners had an occupational pension and 82 per cent. had income from savings. In the same year 83 per cent. of all pensioners and 90 per cent. of those recently retired had income from one or both of these sources.

27. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the average increase in incomes since 1979 for those pensioners who receive all of their income from state benefits.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The latest available figures show that between 1979 and 1987 pensioners who receive all of their income from state benefits had experienced a real terms increase of over 27 per cent.

30. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the increase in pensioners' average net income for *(a)* 1974 to 1979 and *(b)* 1979 to date.

32. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by how much pensioners' average net incomes have increased since 1979.

46. **Mr. Alison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the average annual increase in pensioners' total incomes *(a)* since 1979 and *(b)* between 1974 to 1979.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Between 1974 and 1979, pensioners' average total net incomes rose by an average of 0·6 per cent. per year in real terms or 3·0 per cent. over the whole period, whereas between 1979 and 1987 they rose on average by over 3 per cent. each year. In total they rose by over 31 per cent. in real terms in this Government's first eight years of office.

31. **Mr. Lester:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the most recent figures he has for the increase in pensioners' incomes from savings since 1979.

63. **Mr. Mills:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of *(a)* all pensioners and *(b)* recently retired pensioners is receiving income from savings.

65. **Sir George Young:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by how much pensioners' incomes from savings changed between *(a)* 1979 and the latest date and *(b)* 1974 to 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The latest available figures show that between 1979 and 1987 pensioners' average income from savings more than doubled in real terms. This compares favourably with the period from 1974 to 1979 when the value of pensioners' savings fell by 16 per cent. In 1987, 73 per cent. of all pensioners and 82 per cent. of recently retired pensioners received income from savings.

67. **Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the latest available figures on the proportion of pensioners whose incomes fall in the lowest fifth of national income distribution.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The latest available figures show that in 1987 only 24 per cent. of pensioners had incomes in the lowest fifth of national income distribution; whereas, when we took office in 1979, 38 per cent. of pensioners fell into the lowest fifth.

Low-paid workers

26. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many low-paid workers are entitled to claim means-tested benefits and also liable to pay income tax; and what was the number in 1985.

53. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many low-paid workers are entitled to claim means-tested benefits and also liable to pay income tax; and what was the number in 1985.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer the hon. Members to the reply given to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) earlier today.

Independent Living Fund

34. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations his Department has received from the Association of Directors of Social Services and the Disablement Income Group concerning the phasing out of the independent living fund.

Mr. Scott: We have received no representations from the Association of Directors of Social Services concerning the future of the independent living fund.

We have consulted the Disablement Income Group and will continue to do so as the plans for the future of the ILF are being evolved.

35. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received from local authorities concerning the phasing out of the independent living fund.

Mr. Scott: We have received representations from some local authority directors of social services concerning the future of the ILF.

As was made clear in our report on disability benefits, "The Way Ahead", we shall be consulting local authorities on the future of the independent living fund in relation to the implementation of the proposals for care in the community to take effect in April 1991.

Departmental Services

36. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what measures are being introduced to improve his Department's services to the public; and if he will make a statement.

47. **Sir Geoffrey Finsberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps have been taken to improve his Department's service to the public.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Since the Government reforms were introduced in 1988, the social security system has become simpler for claimants to understand and easier for staff to operate. As a result there have been very real all-round improvements in standards of service to the public. For example, in 1989-90 the average time taken to clear income support claims improved by 25 per cent. (to 4·7 days) compared with 1987-88, the last year before the reforms, and error rates fell by 31 per cent. (to 7·9 per cent.).

There is still room for further improvement, particularly in inner London. This is being tackled by relocating work which requires no face-to-face contact away from 21 London offices to areas where recruitment and retention of staff is easier. There is already substantial evidence that significant improvements in accuracy, clearance times and quality of service are being made.

By 1991 the programme to computerise social security operations will bring major improvements in service to the public to all offices and enable staff to process claims more accurately and quickly.

66. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what progress is being made in implementing the recommendations contained in his Department's business of service report.

Mr. Newton: I have today placed in the Library the implementation report of the regional organisation scrutiny, the business of service, which I have approved.

In January 1989, my predecessor approved and announced to Parliament an action plan for implementation and the business of service scrutiny of my Department's regional organisation, which was published in June 1988. This major and wide-ranging review addressed a number of improvements which might be made in the regional organisation's performance, and looked forward to improvements in the organisation and management of work to be achieved in the context of a benefits agency. The report's central thrust was towards devolution of authority to local office managers as the best means of improving service to the public. Other recommendations were for a shortening of the line of senior management, improvements in resource allocation and management, development of local service planning, improved training for managers to help them fulfil their new tasks, the development of a corporate image for the service, and the provision of improved management information for managers at all levels.

Some important recommendations have already been put into effect; a start has been made on the relocation of work from certain offices in inner London, and a national statement of good service was published in May last year, associated with targets for improvement by local offices in the delivery of key benefit outputs. A substantial programme of further work lies ahead, and is being carried forward as part of our preparations for setting up the

benefits agency. I am confident that if this work is carried through successfully, the benefits agency will be well placed to make further improvements in the services we deliver and in the way in which it is perceived by both public and staff.

Industrial Injuries

37. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much will be spent by his Department in 1990-91 in the form of benefit to those suffering from industrial diseases or injuries.

Mr. Scott: "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1990-91 to 1992-93", Cm. 1014, copies of which are available in the Library, indicate that an estimated £569 million will be spent on industrial injuries benefits in 1990-91. This includes expenditure of £64 million on industrial death benefit.

Staff Relocation

38. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what progress has been made in relocating his Department's staff away from the London area.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given on 14 November 1989 to my hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) at column *170*, in which my right hon. Friend the former Secretary of State announced that a substantial amount of the Department's work in London was to be relocated to Leeds. A site for the new headquarters building in Leeds has been identified, and we hope that building work will commence by the end of this year. We expect that the relocation of posts from London will begin around the end of 1991 or early 1992.

Community Charge Rebate

39. **Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the increase in community charge rebate for a married couple with capital of £6,000 or more if the £3,000 capital disregard applied to each partner.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: If the lower capital limit for a married or unmarried couple were raised to £3,000 for each partner, community charge benefit would increase by up to £1·80 a week. This assumes that the partners share their savings equally.

Disabled People

40. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the average annual real increase in spending on the disabled between *(a)* 1974-75 and 1978-79 and *(b)* 1978-79 and 1989-90.

Mr. Scott: The average annual real increase, at 1989-90 prices, was as follows:

	£ million
(a) 1974-75 to 1978-79	220
(b) 1978-79 to 1989-90	375

54. **Mr. Hayes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what measures have been introduced to assist sick or disabled people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: We are currently spending £8·3 billion on benefits for long-term sick and disabled people. We announced 10 measures in October 1989 to provide extra help for disabled people and their carers, which include the extension of attendance allowance to disabled children under two and mobility allowance to people who are both deaf and blind; the increase over and above the normal annual increase, in the adult disability premium in income support and housing benefit, by £1 for a single person and £1·60 for a couple; and the more than doubling of the disabled child premium in income support and housing benefit from £6·50 to £15·40 per week.

"The Way Ahead: Benefits for Disabled People" (Cm. 917), which I laid before Parliament on 10 January, details our major proposals for improving social security help for disabled people. Our proposals include increasing severe disablement allowance for nearly 250,000 disabled people later this year; a new disability allowance for people of working age and below to improve help with the extra costs of being disabled; and a new disability employment credit to make it easier for disabled people to take up jobs.

43. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what discussion he has had recently with representatives of voluntary organisations for the disabled about benefit levels under the community charge.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We have not recently discussed community charge benefit levels with representatives of the voluntary organisations for disabled people.

National Insurance

41. **Mr. Arbuthnot:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on his proposals for improving the collection of national insurance contributions.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We have recently established a new unit within the Department to take responsibility for all the operational aspects of national insurance contributions work.

The unit will place a high priority on compliance, and there will be improved training for national insurance inspectors. Their existing jobs will be reorganised so that they can spend more time visiting employers and investigating national insurance irregularities. By carrying out other contributions work more efficiently, it is intended that staff resources will be released to allow additional inspectors to be deployed.

From April 1991, we propose that the unit should be given full agency status, thus increasing management accountability and encouraging the development of a more professional approach to contributions work.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if people found to be wrongly imprisoned are fully credited for national insurance contributions during their stay in custody.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: There are no legislative provisions which allow national insurance credits to be awarded in these circumstances.

Personal Pensions

44. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people he estimates are preparing for their retirement by taking out personal pensions.

51. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest estimate he has as to the number of people who have joined a personal pension scheme.

58. **Mr. Donald Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest estimate of the number of people who have taken out appropriate personal pensions.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Just under 3·7 million people have so far taken out appropriate personal pensions.

Carers' Premium

52. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people he estimates will benefit from the introduction of the carers' premium.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We expect the new £10 premium, being introduced in October, to help 30,000 carers through income support, housing benefit and community charge benefit.

Benefit Uprating

59. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in which years during the 1980s the uprating of supplementary benefit or income support rates provided for an increase in their real value; and by what percentage.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) earlier today.

Expenditure

61. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total expenditure by his Department in *(a)* 1978-79 and *(b)* 1989-90.

Mr. Scott: Total expenditure in 1978-79 was £16,437 million in cash terms, or £38,677 million in 1989-90 prices. Estimated total expenditure for 1989-90 is £52,583 million.

Hostel Accommodation

62. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement about payments of benefits to people in hostel accommodation.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: People living in hostels are able to claim housing benefit to help towards accommodation charges and income support to help towards other day-to-day living expenses. In my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) on 16 May at column *421* I announced that direct payments of income support for service charges are to be made available to all hostels from 21 May. This extends the existing arrangements which have hitherto applied only to night shelters.

Residential Homes

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the expenditure in each social security office area in Wales for the most recent available year, on paying for people to live in *(a)* private residential homes and *(b)* private nursing homes, respectively.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I regret the information requested is unavailable and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to provide housing benefit to those in local authority residential homes.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: People in local authority residential homes are required to contribute to the cost of their care and accommodation according to their means. Those with insufficient resources to pay the statutory minimum contribution may be entitled to income support. Housing benefit is not payable in addition as there is no unmet liability for housing costs. We have no plans to change these provisions following the proposed introduction of the new arrangements for community care from April 1991.

Pension Entitlement

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the cost of giving pension entitlement as of the day after a woman's 60th birthday and a man's 65th birthday.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The estimated cost in 1990-91 is £6 million.

Shelter Report

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will obtain a copy of the report by Shelter, "Our Homes, Our Rights," for his departmental library; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: A copy of the report has already been ordered for the departmental library. Its contents will be considered carefully after it is received.

State Pensions

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will now instigate a scheme for the equalisation of state pension provision between sexes, with the provision of a basic state pension from the age of 60 years.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will introduce legislation to harmonise age-related benefits and concessions at the age of 60 years, for both sexes.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have been asked to reply.

Equalisation of state pension provision for men and women and the effect which it would have on other benefits and concessions is a complex issue requiring careful study. Consideration needs to be given to a number of factors. The Government will not be drawn into making hasty decisions and will bring forward proposals only when all the issues have been fully considered.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Eastern Europe

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement in respect of the notice to his Department's employees as to what

present potential hazards are to be experienced if they travel to *(a)* East Germany, *(b)* Czechoslovakia, *(c)* Hungary, *(d)* Poland and *(e)* Romania.

Mr. Maclean: In the public service it has long been the practice to advise staff of the problems that they may encounter when travelling to certain countries, particularly if the staff concerned may have access to classified information. This is for the protection of both Government information and the officers themselves. The guidelines are being reviewed in the light of recent changes in eastern Europe.

Perrier

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement clarifying his Department's concerns about Perrier labelling.

Mr. Maclean: We have asked the European Commission whether the use of the description "naturally carbonated natural mineral water" on the label of Perrier meets the requirements of Council directive 80/777/EEC.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which animal species are currently, or have been, involved in experiments in the transmission of spongiform encephalopathy; and what have been the results to date.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) on 16 May, *Official Report*, column *464*.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will cull all calves born of animals infected with bovine spongiform encephalopathy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 17 May 1990]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Gedling (Mr. Mitchell) on 17 May 1990, *Official Report*, column 1009.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if bovine spongiform encephalopathy has been notified in cattle under two years of age; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: BSE has been confirmed in one animal under two years of age; a cow aged 22 months.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has concerning the transmissibility of bovine spongiform encephalopathy between mammals by biting or oral contact or any other non-experimental method, apart from ingestion.

Mr. Maclean: There is no evidence of any natural means of transmission of BSE other than ingestion.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy have been reported to him to date in cattle first identified as bovine spongiform encephalopathy-suspect by veterinary inspection at *(a)* fatstock markets and *(b)* slaughterhouses.

Mr. Maclean: The information up to 31 March 1990 is as follows:

	Numbers
(a) Markets	
Suspects reported	133
Cases confirmed	92
(b) Slaughterhouses	
Suspects reported	203
Cases confirmed	149

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the *(a)* total cost and *(b)* cost per suspect head of testing cattle suspected as suffering from BSE.

Mr. Maclean: The full economic cost of conducting a histopathological examination on a brain for BSE diagnosis is £166. Since 21 June 1988, when BSE became notifiable, the veterinary investigation service has examined 14,253 brains at a total cost of £2,365,998.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many tests of cattle heads were conducted for BSE in the first four months of the current year; and how many were confirmed.

Mr. Maclean: In the first four months of this year 4,215 cattle were slaughtered as BSE suspects. Of those, BSE has been confirmed in 3,596. Results are pending on 186.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 16 May, what information he has concerning the number and distribution of calves born to cows subsequently confirmed as BSE sufferers.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) on 23 April, *Official Report*, column *80*.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, whether it is his Department's practice to confirm by laboratory tests all notified cases of BSE.

Mr. Maclean: All cattle slaughtered as suspected cases of BSE are subject to diagnostic laboratory tests.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a table showing the distribution of the total number of confirmed cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy, by county, in the United Kingdom in the four weeks to 17 May.

Mr. Maclean: The information for Great Britain is as follows:

County	*Number*
Avon	27
Bedfordshire	4
Berkshire	3
Borders	1
Buckinghamshire	11
Cambridgeshire	5
Central	3
Cheshire	32
Cleveland	1
Clwyd	11
Cornwall	72
Cumbria	16
Derbyshire	11
Devonshire	94

County	Number
Dorset	80
Dumfries	6
Durham	11
Dyfed	76
Essex	7
Fife	3
Glamorgan M	6
Glamorgan W	1
Gloucestershire	45
Grampian	7
Gwent	11
Gwynedd	3
Hampshire	50
Hereford and Worcestershire	23
Hertfordshire	5
Highland	5
Humberside	4
Isle of Wight	5
Kent	25
Lancashire	38
Leicestershire	27
Lincolnshire	10
Manchester	1
Norfolk	15
Northamptonshire	8
Northumberland	4
Nottinghamshire	8
Oxfordshire	20
Powys	13
Salop	28
Somerset	95
Staffordshire	28
Strathclyde	13
Suffolk	13
Surrey	18
Sussex E	21
Sussex W	22
Tayside	2
Warwickshire	10
Wiltshire	39
Yorkshire N	45
Yorkshire S	5
Yorkshire W	1
Total	1,148

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether any cattle infected by bovine spongiform encephalopathy have been buried in Lincolnshire.

Mr. Maclean: Yes; such carcases are buried on licensed tips owned by, and with the agreement of, the county council.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made in the development of diagnostic testing for the agent of bovine spongiform encephalopathy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The nature of the BSE agent requires the application of molecular biology techniques for the development of a diagnostic test. Research is in hand, but cannot be expected to yield results for several years at least.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food at what stage in the development of bovine spongiform encephalopathy in the sub-clinically affected animal it is possible to identify bovine spongiform encephalopathy by histopathological examination.

Mr. Maclean: Research to establish this is being planned, but results will not be available for several years.

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps his staff have taken to ensure that the heads and spinal columns of BSE-infected animals dumped at Attebridge, Norfolk, have been incinerated and that there is no evidence of the BSE virus leading into the River Wensum.

Mr. Maclean: Heads of suspect BSE cattle are removed for diagnosis and then destroyed by incineration. All carcases are buried in accordance with sound veterinary practices to ensure that none poses a risk of spreading disease.

Veterinary Investigation Service

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the future of the veterinary investigation service.

Mr. Maclean: The review of the veterinary investigation service commissioned by the Minister has now been completed and will shortly be submitted to Ministers for their consideration. No decisions have as yet been taken on any of the recommendations of this review.

Zoonoses Order

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representation he has received on the Zoonoses Order 1989.

Mr. Maclean: I have received a number of representations on the Zoonoses Order 1989 about the arrangements for the compulsory slaughter with compensation of salmonella-infected poultry flocks. These were taken into account when new compensation rates were announced on 13 February followed by provisions for the processing of carcases from infected flocks, under carefully controlled conditions, which I announced on 26 March.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will increase to 100 per cent. compensation paid to farmers whose poultry are slaughtered under the Zoonoses Order 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I have no plans to do so. The present compensation arrangements are in line with the requirements of the Animal Health Act 1981 and any producer who disputes the Ministry's valuation can take the matter to independent arbitration.

Slaughterhouses

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on his timetable for the implementation of the European Community requirement for the ante mortem veterinary inspection of livestock at all slaughterhouses.

Mr. Maclean: I regret that the reply which I gave to the hon. Member on 3 May, *Official Report*, column *641*, contained a typing error. Ante mortem inspection is to be introduced in non-exporting plants from 1 January 1991, not 1 January 1993.

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the European Commission's proposals concerning the slaughter of horses.

Mr. Maclean: I am not aware of any European Commission proposals exclusively concerned with the slaughter of horses. However, Commission officials are working on a draft measure on the welfare of all animals, including horses, at slaughter. A formal proposal has not yet been made to the Council, but I welcome the Commission's intention to propose a strengthening of Community legislation in this important area.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the requirement for the high temperature processing of slaughterhouse waste before turning into cattle cake was relaxed; what scientific advice was taken; and if he has any proposals for restoring the regulations in the light of the transmission of scrapie to cattle.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) of 14 March, *Official Report*, column *241*.

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will take steps to ensure that red meat from cows is not contaminated by nervous tissue during the slaughtering process.

Mr. Maclean: The Specified Bovine Offal (Prohibition) Regulations 1989 make it an offence to use in food for human consumption any specified bovine offal. This is an ultra-precautionary measure applying to all cattle over six months of age designed to ensure that no material in which the BSE agent, if it is present, is most likely to occur enters human food. The enforcement of standards of practice in slaughterhouses, including the hygienic removal of specified bovine offal, is the responsibility of local authorities. The Ministry is ready to give advice if it is needed and we are considering the issue of guidance.

Fishing Vessels

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will supply the costs and earnings for the period 1983 to 1989 for United Kingdom fishing vessels broken down by vessel type: *(a)* beam trawlers, *(b)* pelagic trawlers, *(c)* otter trawlers, *(d)* demersal seiners, *(e)* purse seiners and *(f)* drifters;

(2) if he will supply figures for the costs and earnings of United Kingdom fishing vessels in England and Wales for the period 1983 to 1989, broken down by Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food category vessel size *(a)* under 40 ft, *(b)* 40 to 79·9 ft, *(c)* 80 to 109·9 ft, *(d)* 110 to 139·9 ft and *(e)* 140 ft and over.

Mr. Curry: The information requested is not readily available but I will write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals he has for improving conservation by decommissioning grants for fishing vessels; and what funds are available from the European Community for this purpose.

Mr. Curry: I have nothing to add to the replies which I gave to the hon. Member on 11 January, 22 February and 18 April, columns *1077-78*, *901* and *954*.

Food and Wine Surpluses

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his latest estimate of the amount which will be spent each week by the EEC in 1990 on the disposal and destruction of food and wine surpluses; and if the figure has been reviewed in the light of the recent price settlement.

Mr. Curry: The European Commission's latest estimate of expenditure expected in 1990 on storage withdrawal and export refunds for agricultural products is 218 million ecu (£156 million) per week. A revised estimate has not been produced since the price-fixing settlement of 27 April, but we do not expect this expenditure to increase significantly in 1990 as a result of the price fixing.

Research and Development

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will place a copy of the Barnes review report on research and development in the Library.

Mr. Gummer: No. The Barnes review was an internal exercise whose report, like all advice from officials to Ministers, is confidential.

Government Supply Index

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about his Department's decision not to participate in the Government supply index.

Mr. Curry: The Department joined the Government supply index as a founder member in 1987 and has no plans to withdraw its participation.

Fishing Industry

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information his Department has on the average earnings of employees in the United Kingdom fish-catching sector by salary grade.

Mr. Curry: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information his Department has on the average earnings of employees in the United Kingdom fish-catching sector by *(a)* region and *(b)* Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food category vessel size bands.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information his Department has on the average number of employees per vessel in the United Kingdom fish-catching sector by Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food category vessel size bands.

Mr. Curry: Estimates of the average number of employees per vessel in the United Kingdom fish-catching sector are shown in the table. The information comes from records of crew size for each vessel held by Fisheries Departments.

Vessel length band	Average crew size
Under 10 metres	1·8
10 metres—39·9 ft	2·5
40—79·9 ft	5·0
80—109·9 ft	7·9
110 ft and over	12·3

Scrapie

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the earliest research was carried out in the United Kingdom concerning the infection under laboratory conditions of bovine brains by scrapie; and when was the first confirmation that such infection was possible.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) on 15 March, *Official Report*, column *325*.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when his Department first became aware of the ability to transmit under experimental conditions sheep scrapie to other animal species.

Mr. Maclean: The first report of the transmission of sheep scrapie to another species, in this case goats, was published in 1939. The first report of transmission to animals other than sheep and goats (mice) was published in 1961.

Sugar Levy

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has received any representations about the levy to be imposed on sugar by the intervention board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: I have not received any representations about the levies imposed on sugar other than general comments in the context of the EC review of the sugar regime.

Pet Food

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on his consultations with the Pet Food Manufacturers Association concerning the incorporation of bovine offals in pet food.

Mr. Maclean: My officials have discussed the matter with the Pet Food Manufacturers Association and made clear that there is no scientific justification for stopping the use of bovine offals in food.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the number of pet food manufacturers currently incorporating those bovine offals specified in the Bovine Offals Order in their pet food products.

Mr. Maclean: This information is not available. However, the Pet Food Manufacturers Association, which represents 95 per cent. of pet food manufacturers, advises its members not to use the specified offals.

Cricket Bats

Mr. Allen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from the makers of cricket bats regarding the supply of willow.

Mr. Gummer: None.

Forestry

Mr. McFall: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met representatives of the Forestry Commission to discuss forestry in England.

Mr. Gummer: I met the chairman of the Forestry Commission on 14 November 1989 when we discussed a range of forestry topics. My noble Friend the Minister of State meets commission officials frequently.

British Beef

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what advice he is giving to local authorities that are intending to ban or have banned British beef from their establishments; and if he will make a statement;

(2) on how many occasions, and in which local authorities, members of his staff have met representatives from local authorities to discuss proposed or existing bans on British beef in establishments of the local authorities concerned;

(3) if he will list the local authorities that are intending to ban or have banned British beef in their establishments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 17 May 1990]:* All local authorities have been advised of the Department of Health's view that British beef can be eaten safely by everyone. This Ministry has issued comprehensive guidance to all local authorities, copies of which have been placed in the Library of the House.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 22 May 1990

CIVIL SERVICE

Racial Equality

Mr. Janner: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what plans he has to promote racial equality in the civil service.

Mr. Luce: I have today introduced a programme for action to strengthen equality of opportunity in the civil service for people of ethnic minority origin. Copies have been placed in the Library.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Malawi

Mr. Tom Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will detail the total funding by his Department of the Vipyha forestry project in Malawi; and if he will make a statement about its future.

Mrs. Chalker: British aid for the Vipyha plantation in Malawi started in the 1950s when the Commonwealth Development Corporation established pilot pine plantations. British Government loans were first made in 1964.

Figures for earlier expenditure are not available except at disproportionate cost, but since 1978 almost £3,000,000 in capital aid has been committed, and we have also provided technical and advisory support. The sum of £200,000 for fire-fighting vehicles and equipment was approved in February 1990. The future of the plantation is a matter for the Malawi Government. I understand that a number of possible ways of utilising the timber on a viable and sustainable basis are being considered.

DEFENCE

Mine Warfare Training, Ostend

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what co-operation exists between the Royal Navy and the Belgian navy over the mine warfare training centre at Ostend.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Royal Navy personnel regularly attend courses at the Belgian Navy's Ecole de Guerre des Mines (EGUERMIN) near Ostend. Through our contribution to the NATO infrastructure central fund, the United Kingdom will provide a share of the costs of the proposed minehunting simulator to be installed at EGUERMIN. We will continue to seek opportunities for co-operation in mine warfare training with our NATO partners wherever practical and beneficial.

Military Exports

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to which African countries the United Kingdom has exported arms and military equipment since 1979; and what has been the total value of these exports in present-day prices.

Mr. Alan Clark: It has been the practice of successive Administrations not to publish such detailed information for reasons of commercial confidentiality and national security. However, statistics of United Kingdom defence sales from 1948 to 1989 by broad geographic terms are set out in volume 2 of SDE 90.

HMS Warspite

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the current condition of HMS Warspite and the progress of work on the nuclear reactors of British nuclear-powered submarines.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: HMS Warspite is currently undergoing refit. The programme of inspections of our nuclear-powered submarines is continuing.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether his Department has given any consideration to extending payments made to farmers inside environmentally sensitive areas to include farmers operating within national parks generally.

Mr. Maclean: Payments under the environmentally sensitive areas scheme can be made only to farmers within the boundaries of the designated ESAs. I have no plans at present to extend these boundaries, but I will be reviewing the scheme during 1991. A number of the ESAs are in national parks.

Cheese

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much Irish, French, Belgian, Dutch, German, Swiss and Greek cheese respectively, was imported into the United Kingdom in each year since 1983; what proportion this was of the cheese market in each year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is shown in the table:

Cheese imports into the United Kingdom

(000 tonnes)

Country of Export	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*
Republic of Ireland	43	48	52	61	48	62	44
France	10	11	13	14	17	24	30
Belgium/Luxembourg[1]	7	13	15	15	14	16	14
Netherlands	23	21	23	25	21	25	23

Country of Export	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Federal Republic of Germany	16	23	28	26	27	36	33
Switzerland	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
Greece	[2]	[2]	[2]	[2]	[2]	[2]	[2]
Total	100	117	132	142	128	164	146
Above total as proportion of total United Kingdom domestic uses per cent.	29	32	35	37	32	37	34

[1] not separately identified
[2] less than 500 tonnes

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Bereavement Damages

Mr. Cunliffe: To ask the Attorney-General how many of the 265 replies he has received to his consultation paper on bereavement damages were in favour of *(a)* increasing the limit to (i) £5,000 and (ii) £10,000 or *(b)* leaving the limit unchanged.

The Attorney-General: All the responses to the consultation are still being evaluated and the Lord Chancellor hopes to make an announcement before the summer recess.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Training

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland where were the number of apprentices in Northern Ireland in *(a)* engineering, *(b)* plumbing, *(c)* joinery and *(d)* bricklaying, in the years 1987-88, 1988-89 and 1989-90.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 21 May 1990]:* The number of apprentices registered for training in the specified occupational trades were as follows:

	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
(a) Engineering	232	306	396
(b) Plumbing	42	104	130
(c) Joinery	638	777	933
(d) Bricklaying	333	461	575

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many young people attended each Government training centre in Northern Ireland in 1987-88, and in 1988-89; and what percentage of those from each centre, on completion of their training, went to *(a)* jobs and *(b)* self-employment.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 21 May 1990]:* The table below shows the number of young people trained at the various training centres in Northern Ireland in 1987-88 and 1988-89 and the percentages of such young people who entered employment. There are no figures available for the percentages entering self-employment; as the young people trained at the centres would have completed initial training only in the skills required for apprenticeships etc., it is unlikely that many would have entered self-employment.

Year	Number of young people trained		Percentage entering employment	
	1987-88	1988-89	1987-88	1988-89
Centre				
Ballymena	223	294	85	83
Boucher road	110	135	54	64
Craigavon	232	272	86	91
Dundonald	278	300	82	93
Enniskillen	83	102	78	82
Felden	173	228	79	78
Lisburn	89	108	76	93
Maydown	135	148	57	80
Newry	183	240	93	94
Omagh	105	153	74	96
Springtown	89	86	78	91

Grant Aid

Rev. William McCrea: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how much grant aid M. Kernan (Compost) Limited of 270 Battleford road, Benburb, Dungannon, received during 1986, 1987, 1988 and 1989;

(2) how much grant aid McAnallen Group of Companies of 259 Battleford road, Benburb, Dungannon, received during 1986, 1987, 1988 and 1989;

(3) how much grant aid Donnelly Bros. of 201 Killylea road, Caledon, received during 1986, 1987, 1988 and 1989.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 17 May 1990]:* Grant aid received by these companies in each financial year since April 1985 was as follows:

	M. Kernan (Compost) Ltd.	McAnallen Group	Donnelly Bros.
	£	£	£
1985-86	50,328	7,301	1,400
1986-87	13,971	182,538	—
1987-88	5,536	59,664	—
1988-89	327,606	21,433	—
1989-90	28,126	578,751	—

NATIONAL FINANCE

Saving

Mr. Jack: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent suggestions he has received to encourage saving.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has received a number of suggestions on how saving might best be encouraged. This year's Budget included a series of measures to help the small saver, reinforce the habit of savings and further encourage wider share ownership. In addition, he announced an increase in the interest rates paid on some DNS products.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what value added tax duty is payable on transactions involving nuclear waste.

Mr. Ryder: Transactions involving nuclear waste are liable to the standard rate of VAT.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what excise duty is payable on nuclear waste *(a)* imported to and *(b)* exported from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ryder: None.

Exchange Rate Mechanism

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer at what level of divergence between United Kingdom inflation and the European average he assesses it would be appropriate for the pound sterling to enter the exchange rate mechanism.

Mr. Ryder: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer's evidence to the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee on the 1990 Budget—questions 304 to 307.

Tax Deferral

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many letters have been received by his Department suggesting the implementation of a tax deferral scheme allowing firms to reinvest their profits for a three-year period.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor received one such suggestion before his Budget this year; and from time to time he receives letters proposing favourable tax treatment for profits retained in a business.

European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the establishment of the European bank for reconstruction and development.

Mr. Major: The Government warmly welcome the decision to establish the European bank for reconstruction and development in London. It is particularly welcome that London will be the centre of the international effort to help eastern European countries build on the reforms they have made and to assist them in their move to market economies. We shall be working closely with the president designate to ensure that the bank can begin its operations as soon as possible.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Classical Languages

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many entries were made for A-levels in 1989 in Latin and ancient Greek, respectively; and how many grades A and B in each subject were attained.

Mrs. Rumbold: The following table shows information for school leavers in England in 1988:

Number of school leavers in 1988

	Thousands
A-level Latin	
Entered	1·76
Achieved grade A	0·56
Achieved grade B	0·35
A-level Ancient Greek	
Entered	0·43
Achieved grade A	0·23
Achieved grade B	0·11

Comparable information is not yet available for 1988-89.

School Meals

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the average price of a school meal in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The average price of school meals in primary schools in England in October 1988, the latest date for which information is available, was 65p. It is not possible to give a figure for secondary schools as most operate a cash cafeteria system.

Information relating to Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what is the number and percentage of free school meals provided in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many and what percentage of children in England and Wales took school meals in 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: In January 1989 the number and percentage of pupils provided with school meals in maintained nursery, primary, secondary and special schools in England are as follows. Information relating to Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

	Pupils
Number of pupils provided with free school meals	779,131
as a percentage of all pupils on roll	11
Total number of pupils taking school meals	3,006,710
as a percentage of all pupils on roll	43

Local education authorities are empowered to provide at their discretion refreshment and facilities for the consumption of refreshments in the middle of the day for pupils in schools maintained by them. The Social Security Act 1986 requires that pupils whose parents or who themselves are in receipt of income support should receive such provision free of charge.

National Curriculum Council

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what measures have been taken to ensure that practising school teachers are represented among the membership of working groups established by the National Curriculum Council, whether there is a practising school teacher among the membership of each subject working group; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Subject working groups are established by the Secretaries of State for Education and Science and for Wales to advise them on national curriculum attainment targets and programmes of study. Task groups are set up by the National Curriculum Council for specific tasks such as advice on consultation and non-statutory guidance. All past and existing groups of both types have included practising teachers among their members.

School Closures

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) how many schools were closed in each of the past five years in the Greenwich education authority area;

(2) how many schools were closed in each of the past five years within the constituency of Peterborough.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Greenwich local education authority came into being on 1 April 1990. Information on school closures in Greenwich is not readily available before this date.

Information for parliamentary constituencies or other areas within education authorities is not available centrally.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Fur Farming

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the value of *(a)* domestic sales and *(b)* exports of furs from factory-farm animals; how many animals he estimates this represents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Figures relating specifically to factory-farmed furs, or the number of animals involved, are not available. Nor do domestic sales figures distinguish between furs and other animal skins. The total value of United Kingdom exports of all furs in 1989 was £132 million.

Enterprise Initiative

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will list the companies so far commissioned by Her Majesty's Government to provide professional assistance under the terms of the enterprise initiative;

(2) how much the Government have so far spent in the form of direct payments to companies under the terms of the enterprise initiative;

(3) how many requests for assistance the Government have received under the terms of the enterprise initiative; and what proportion have enjoyed Government support;

(4) if he will list the names of all those companies which have so far received more than *(a)* 10, *(b)* 50 and *(c)* 100 commissions from the Government under the terms of the enterprise initiative.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Between the launch of the assisted consultancy scheme under the enterprise initiative on 13 January 1988 and 31 March 1990, 47,994 applications were received of which one third had at that date completed their consultancy projects. The Department's contribution to the cost of these projects was £49·9 million. Payments are made via independent scheme contractors to the consultants commissioned to undertake projects, and not directly to the client companies.

It is not our practice to provide details of the consultancy firms used by scheme contractors to undertake assisted consultancy projects. This is to avoid the risk of appearing to bestow a form of Government approval or endorsement, to the unfair disadvantage of practices no less competent but which for one reason or another are not associated with the scheme.

Packaging Industry

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what percentage of plastic production is now used by the packaging industry.

Mr. Forth: Appoximately 35 per cent., measured by weight.

Bergen Conference

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what consideration his Department intends to give to the implications for United Kingdom industry of the results of the Bergen conference on the environment.

Mr. Forth: My Department will be giving careful consideration to the outcome of the conference and its implications for United Kingdom industry. These will be covered in our day-to-day contacts with industry.

Product Safety

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary fo State for Trade and Industry if he will make it his policy to support the European Parliament's amendments to the draft product safety directive at meetings of the Council of Ministers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The amendments suggested by the European Parliament will of course be taken fully into account during further negotiations on this directive. However, I can give no commitment to supporting their amendments, some of which are direcly contrary to the motion supported by the House following the debate on 10 May.

Renault

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will estimate the effect on the competitiveness of the British car industry of the refusal of the French Government to reclaim substantial sums from messrs Renault, as instructed by the European Economic Community Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: I understand that the Commission has made a decision on this case only today. I do not know what the considered response of the French Government will be. I will continue to watch the case closely.

Tear Gas

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what requirement there is for sales of tear gas to be notified to his Department.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 15 May 1990]:* There is no requirement for sales of tear gas to be notified to my Department. It is the practice to require a licence to export tear gas to any destination.

Jordan (Arms Purchases)

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the cost to the Exchequer of Jordan reneging on payment for equipment supplied by British companies under the £275 million Jordan defence package.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 17 May 1990]:* I do not expect the Exchequer to incur any losses in connection with defence exports to Jordan.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what support was required from the Export Credit Guarantees Department for the recent arms deals with the Jordanian Government.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 17 May 1990]:* It has been the practice of successive Governments not to disclose information about individual cases.

National Council for Environmental Waste Policy

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what were the responsibilities of his Department in the establishment of the National Council for Environmental Waste Policy in April; and what role his Department will play in the work of the council in future.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 21 May 1990]:* My Department has had no involvement in the establishment of such a council. However, under its environmental programme, the Department is seeking to promote greater recycling of waste and higher standards of waste management and waste minimisation within business and is always prepared to consider co-operating with other organisations pursuing similar objectives.

Japan (Visit)

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will place in the Library a copy of his speech in Tokyo to Japanese business men on 14 May.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 21 May 1990]:* I have placed a copy of my speech at the inward investment seminar in Tokyo on 14 May in the Library of the House.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

MPs' Travel

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Lord President of the Council what was the total payment made on account of Members of Parliament travel during 1989-90, analysed by *(a)* travel by rail, *(b)* travel by car and *(c)* travel by air, with respect to travel within their constituencies, or between London and their constituencies.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Payments made from the House of Commons Members Salaries etc. vote (class XX, vote 20) during 1989-90 in respect of travel by Members between their homes, Westminster and their constituencies and within their constituencies amounted to £5,913,667.

The analysis of this cost relating to the method of travel is as follows:

	£
Travel by rail	820,827
Travel by car	4,374,286
Travel by air	718,554

Detailed figures in respect of Members' travel within constituencies or between London and constituencies are not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

ENVIRONMENT

Contaminated Land

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when he expects to receive the departmental working party report on the feasibility of establishing registers of contaminated land; whether he will place a copy in the Library; whether he intends the registers to be compulsory or voluntary; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether he will place in the Library a copy of the report by the departmental working group on drawing up registers of contaminated land.

Mr. Trippier: Following receipt of the departmental working party report on 25 April, I announced during the Commons Report stage of the Environmental Protection Bill on 30 April that the Government proposed to introduce an amendment placing a duty upon district councils in England and Wales to compile and maintain registers of potentially contaminating land uses. That amendment is to be tabled in the Lords, following consultation with the local authority associations on the detailed implications and practicalities involved.

I have placed a copy of the working party report in the Library.

Genetically Engineered Organisms

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has had from Greenpeace in respect of his plans to regulate the release of genetically engineered organisms.

Mr. Trippier: Greenpeace made representations in a letter dated 24 August 1989 in response to the Department's June 1989 consultation paper on proposals for the control of genetically modified organisms which now form part VI of the Environmental Protection Bill currently before Parliament.

Pollution Inspectors

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many of Her Majesty's inspectors of pollution are currently responsible for the west midlands area.

Mr. Trippier: There are currently six pollution inspectors in post discharging Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution regulatory responsibilities in the west midlands area.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on morale within Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

Mr. Chris Patten: Morale in HMIP is high, and staff are preparing with energy and enthusiasm for integrated pollution control and the other new responsibilities proposed for them under the Environmental Protection Bill.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on staffing levels within Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how far Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution is below its full staff complement;

(2) how many of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution inspectors have been appointed as a result of the recent recruitment round.

Mr. Chris Patten: There are currently 206 staff in post in Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, compared with 148 when HMIP was established in April 1987. The staff complement has recently been increased further to 250. HMIP therefore has 44 vacancies within the increased complement. Twenty-five of the vacancies are for professional staff, of which seven are reserved for successful candidates to date from the current recruitment competition. We are continuing to recruit actively to fill the remaining posts.

HMIP has also introduced an additional assistant pollution inspector recruitment grade, for candidates with full professional qualifications and at least two years industry experience, who will qualify as pollution inspectors through further training and experience in the inspectorate. This will widen the recruitment for future pollution inspectors, while fully maintaining the present professional standards. The first recruitment competition for APIs is now in progress.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has made an assessment of staffing and inspection levels within Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution necessary for the effectiveness of the enforcement powers contained within the Environmental Protection Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution inspectors will be required to undertake *(a)* the writing of IPC (IPR) authorisations under the Environmental Protection Bill, *(b)* the writing of new Batneec notes under the Environmental Protection Bill and *(c)* routine site inspections of scheduled processes.

Mr. Chris Patten *[holding answer 17 May 1990]:* I am committed to ensuring that Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution will effectively discharge its responsibilities and the new duties proposed for it in the Environmental Protection Bill. The level of resources required to accomplish this is kept under continual review.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution inspectors are available in the field to undertake inspections of scheduled processes.

Mr. Chris Patten *[holding answer, 17 May 1990]:* There is currently a total of 69 inspectors posted to Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution's regional field force.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the proposed inspection rates for Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution in MINIS 9 and MINIS 10 have been achieved.

Mr. Chris Patten *[holding answer, 17 May 1990]:* Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution came close to meeting most of the proposals for inspection activity set out in MINIS 10, bettered a number, and did not fully achieve some others. The figures are as follows:

	1989-90 Performance	*MINIS 10 Target*
Air:		
Inspections	7,350	7,550
Samples taken	1,350	1,900
Water:		
Inspection of sewage treatment works	545	500
Discharge consents issued to water authorities	1,302	800
Radioactive Substances Inspections:		
Nuclear premises	259	270
Non-nuclear premises	606	680
Waste:		
Visits to Waste Disposal Authorities	[1]154	[3]50
Inspections of major hazardous waste facilities	[2]267	[3]100

[1] of which 22 programmed
[2] 50 programmed
[3] programmed

A full account of the year's activity will be given in HMIP's MINIS 11 return, which will be published in due course.

As I described in the answer I gave today we have recently increased HMIP's complement to 250 posts, and are actively recruiting professional staff to bring the inspectorate up to the increased strength.

The MINIS 10 return, available in the Library, reported on achievement of MINIS 9 proposals.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what inspection rates are proposed for Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution in MINIS 11; and what were the proposed rates in MINIS 9 and MINIS 10.

Mr. Chris Patten *[holding answer 17 May 1990]:* The Department's MINIS 11 directorate return will as usual be published when ministerial colleagues and I have completed consideration of them. The MINIS 9 and 10 returns are available in the Library.

Satellite TV Dishes

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what will be the cost to public funds of installing satellite television receiving equipment in the House; and where it will be located.

Mr. Chope: At the request of the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee the Parliamentary Works Office is at present looking into the options for providing satellite television services to the House. It is hoped to provide a report, including costs, before the spring Adjournment.

Local Government Expenditue

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of English local authority expenditure is devoted to *(a)* fulfilment of statutory duties, and *(b)* discretionary expenditure.

Mr. Portillo: I regret that this information is not available.

Councillors (Personal Interests)

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many dispensations to speak and vote he gave in 1989 to local councillors with personal or pecuniary interests.

Mr. Portillo: In 1989, 1,318 councillors with pecuniary interests were given dispensation to speak and vote.

Homelessness

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the organisations to which he has given *(a)* an increase in grant and *(b)* a decrease in grant in 1990-91 compared with 1989-90 under the system of grants to voluntary organisations working in the field of homelessness together with the actual change and percentage change in each case.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him yesterday.

School Meals

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the estimated cost of administration to provide school meals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The cost of administration of school catering is provisionally estimated at £33 million in 1988-89, which is the latest year for which information is available. This estimate excludes any local authority general administration costs recharged to individual services.

Sovereign's Entrance

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the work to be carried out to allow the Sovereign's Entrance in the Palace of Westminster to be used for the line of route.

Mr. Chope: The contract for the work has been let. Subject to the manufacturer achieving the quoted delivery period for the railings, visitors should be able to use the Entrance before the end of June.

Housing Grants

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what assessment of the impact on the homeless was made prior to his decision to stop section 73 funding to CHAR;

(2) what representations he has received about CHAR losing section 73 funding; if he will reconsider this decision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer *[holding answer 17 May 1990]:* We have increased the resources available for grants to voluntary bodies under section 73 of the Housing Act 1985 from £680,000 in 1989-90 to £2 million for 1990-91. Half that total is allocated to a national homelessness advice service involving citizens advice bureaux, the Shelter Housing Aid Centre and Shelter; half to practical projects providing direct help to homeless people. Twenty-six bodies have been offered grant in respect of specific practical projects. I believe that this approach will provide more direct help to homeless people than the previous use of section 73 funds for core funding voluntary bodies. I have received a number of representations on behalf of CHAR, but I will not raise hopes of further funding this year: all the funds are earmarked.

"Football Spectator Violence"

Sir Neil Macfarlane: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will issue copies of the 1984 Government report "Football Spectator Violence", of which his officials were members, to all police forces in the United Kingdom;

(2) if he will *(a)* reissue his 1984 departmental report, "Football Spectator Violence" published by HMSO, ISBN 0 11 751749 6, and *(b)* distribute copies to the Football Association and the Football League.

Mr. Moynihan *[holding answer 17 May 1990]:* The report on football spectator violence was issued in 1984 and copies were sent to the football authorities and the Association of Chief Police Officers among others. One of its recommendations was that high-risk clubs should not play away at major seaside towns on or during public holidays. Following the disgraceful scenes of football hooliganism in Bournemouth on 5 May, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has secured an undertaking from the Football League that in future it will give proper regard to a chief constable's assessment of the prospect of disorder when determining fixtures.

Landlords

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett), *Official Report*, 16 March, column *389*, on the gains made by private landlords, if he will make it his policy to set up an inquiry into profits made by landlords in *(a)* Manchester and *(b)* England from not reducing rate-inclusive rents by appropriate amounts following the introduction of the poll tax.

Mr. Michael Spicer *[holding answer 18 May 1990]:* No.

Toxic Wastes

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what dangerous chemicals included on the red list are being deposited in landfill sites in west Yorkshire.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 18 May 1990]:* Information on deposits of red list substances in landfill sites in west Yorkshire is not held centrally. Consent for such deposits is a matter for the waste disposal authorities concerned acting in consultation with the NRA.

Water Privatisation

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the inflationary factor used when determining the new infrastructure charge limits agreed for the new water companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 18 May 1990]:* In determining the infrastructure charge limits it was assumed that construction costs would move relative to the RPI as follows

	Per cent.
1990-91	+3·6
1991-92	−0·2
1992-93	−3·7
1993-94	−4·6
[1]1994-95	0

[1]and subsequent years.

and that the RPI would increase by 5 per cent. in 1990-91. After 1990-91 the limits may increase by the RPI unless they are subject to review by the director general in the context of a review of the general charges limits.

Local Government Finance

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what would be the cost of permitting married women who do not undertake employment, and have no investment income, to pay only 20 per cent. of the community charge.

Mr. Michael Portillo *[holding answer 21 May 1990]:* I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope), yesterday to my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin).

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to bring forward his alternative proposals for the operation of the poll tax.

Mr. Chope: We are looking to see whether any improvements could be made to the operation of the community charge. If and when any such improvements are identified they will be announced at the appropriate time.

Conservation, Islay

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from parties who feel that they have been disadvantaged by the decision to protect Duich Moss on Islay.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have been asked to reply.

No representations have been received since the agreement to protect Duich Moss was announced on 13 May 1989.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Council of Europe

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the 86th session of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 10 May.

Mr. Maude: The 86th session of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe focused on the interest in the Council shown by the countries of central and eastern Europe and on the contribution the Council could make to further progress in the CSCE process. The United Kingdom was represented by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

A copy of the final communiqué of the meeting is being placed in the Library.

Fiji

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on whether the Fijian Government intend to hold a referendum on the basis of one person one vote before accepting any new constitution; what contacts Her Majesty's Government have had with the Fijians on this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have no information on whether the Fiji Government intend to hold such a referendum. We have had no contacts with the Fiji Government or the Fijians on this matter.

Embassies

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list British embassies according to the grade of the ambassador.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is not our policy to disclose the grades of our ambassadors.

Hong Kong

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will discuss with the Governor of Hong Kong *(a)* the conditions and state of health of the Vietnamese refugees confined in each of the camps in Hong Kong, respectively and *(b)* recent riots in each of the camps in Hong Kong, respectively.

Mr. Maude: Yes. The best way to improve conditions in the camps and to remove the risk of riots is for those found after status-determination procedures not to be refugees to be returned in safety to their own communities in Vietnam.

Diplomatic Relations

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give the dates on which diplomatic relations with any member state of the United Nations were severed, indicating in each case whether it was Britain or the country concerned which severed the relations.

Mr. Sainsbury: Following is the information:

Cases in which the United Kingdom has initiated a break in diplomatic relations with the United Kingdom since 1946

	Country	*Dates*	
1.	Albania	1946	—
2.	Uganda	28 July 1976	21 April 1979
3.	Argentina	2 April 1982	19 February 1990
4.	Libya	30 April 1984	—
5.	Syria	31 October 1986	—
6.	Cambodia	6 December 1979	—

Cases in which other countries initiated a break in diplomatic relations with the United Kingdom since 1946

	Country	*Dates*	
1.	Iran	1951 7 March 1989	December 1952 —
2.	Saudi Arabia	17 November 1956	28 July 1963
3.	Yemen	16 February 1963	December 1967
4.	Somali Republic	18 March 1963	4 January 1968
5.	Guatemala	Reduced to consular level 31 July 1963 Consular relations broken September 1981 Resumed August 1986 Full diplomatic relations resumed December 1986	

	Country	Dates	
6.	Algeria	18 December 1965	10 April 1968
7.	Congo (Brazzaville)	16 December 1965	10 April 1968
8.	Ghana	16 December 1965	5 March 1966
9.	Guinea	15 December 1965	20 February 1968
10.	Mali	16 December 1965	10 April 1968
11.	Mauritania	17 December 1965	10 April 1968
12.	Sudan	18 December 1965 6 June 1967	16 April 1966 25 January 1968
13.	Tanzania	15 December 1965	4 July 1968
14	UAR	17 December 1965 1956	12 December 1967 1959
15.	Iraq	8 June 1967 1 December 1967	1 May 1968 resumed by 5 September 1974
16.	Syria	6 June 1967	28 May 1973
17.	Iceland	19 February 1976	2 June 1976

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those countries with which Britain has diplomatic relations but where there is no resident ambassador in the country to which he is accredited, indicating in each case where the ambassador resides.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have full diplomatic relations on a non-resident basis with the following countries (the country of residence of Her Majesty's ambassador/high commissioner is shown in parentheses after each):

Antigua and Barbuda (Barbados)
Benin (Nigeria)
Burkina (Ivory Coast)
Burundi (Zaire)
Cape Verde (Senegal)
Central African Republic (Cameroon)
Chad (London)
Comoros (Mauritius)
Djibouti (Yemen, North)
Commonwealth of Dominica (Barbados)
Dominican Republic (Venezuela)
El Salvador (Honduras)
Equatorial Guinea (Cameroon)
Grenada (Barbados)
Guinea (Senegal)
Guinea-Bissau (Senegal)
Haiti (Jamaica)
Laos (Thailand)
Maldives (Sri Lanka)
Mali (Senegal)
Mauritania (Senegal)
Nauru (Fiji)
Nicaragua (Costa Rica)
Niger (Ivory Coast)
Rwanda (Zaire)
St. Kitts, Nevis (Barbados)
St. Lucia (Barbados)
St. Vincent and The Grenadines (Barbados)
Sao Tome (Angola)
Surinam (Guyana)
Togo (Ghana)
Tuvalu (Fiji))
Western Samoa (New Zealand)

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the member states of the United Nations Organisation with which the United Kingdom does not have diplomatic relations.

Mr. Sainsbury: The following is the information:

Albania
Bhutan
Cambodia
Iran
Libya
Syria

International Organisations

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the international organisations of which Britain is a member, indicating in each case the date of joining, the cost of membership, and the number of British nationals employed by the organisation.

Mr. Sainsbury: There is no central list of all the international organisations to which the United Kingdom belongs. The information could be assembled only at disproportionate cost.

War Crimes

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will request the Japanese Government to investigate allegations, made by British ex-service men, of war crimes against Kiyoaki Tanara and Shigeyuki Hashimoto; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have no evidence in our records to support these allegations and do not, therefore, feel justified in raising this matter with the Japanese Government.

Mrs. Maroof Jan

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when a decision is to be taken on the application made to the British high commission in Islamabad by Mrs. Maroof Jan, whose date of birth is 1958, ref. IMM/43953, to enter the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sainsbury: In accordance with the guidelines on the handling of representations by Members of Parliament in immigration cases, issued to Members on 14 December 1988, I have referred the question to the correspondence unit of the migration and visa department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The hon. Member will receive a reply from the unit as soon as possible.

Border Checks

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his reply of 15 May, *Official Report*, column *380*, if he will specify the sections of the debate on inter-community frontiers on 4 May 1989 which set out the border checks on individuals which are to be removed in consequence of the European Economic Community arrangements described in the pamphlet "Europe in the 1990s", issued by his Department.

Mr. Maude: As stated in my answer on 15 May, c. *380*, my right hon. Friend the then Home Secretary set out our position in full in the debate on 4 May 1989. Discussions continue with our partners.

EC Budget

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his reply of 11 May, what factors have led to the increase in the United Kingdom net contribution to the European Community for 1989 to £2,315 million.

Mr. Maude: I refer my hon. Friend to paragraphs 23 to 27 of the statement on the 1990 Community budget which was presented to the House on 26 April.

Assize of European Parliamentarians

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the assize of European parliamentarians comprising 50 per cent. Members of the European Parliament and 50 per cent. national Members of Parliament, scheduled to be held in Italy in the autumn, setting out what knowledge he may have of its status, the terms and conditions under which it is established, how it is to be funded and the authority and standing of any conclusions that it may reach.

Mr. Maude: We understand that the Italian Chamber of Deputies has agreed to host the meeting with national parliaments in Rome in October which had been advocated by the European Parliament. The European Parliament has not yet made clear what organisational or financial arrangements it proposes. Such a meeting would enjoy no status under the treaty and the authority of any conclusions reached would derive from the support of those present.

Single European Act

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he will reply to the report of the Foreign Affairs Committee on the operation of the Single European Act.

Mr. Maude: We will publish our observations on the report at 1530 hours on 22 May 1990.

WALES

Trunk Road Improvements

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much has been spent on trunk road improvements in Gwynedd in the last 12 months excluding the A55 expressway.

Mr. Roberts: Estimated expenditure in 1989-90 on new construction and improvement in Gwynedd, excluding the A55 north Wales coast road, is £5·4 million.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing *(a)* the latest average unemployment rate in development areas in Wales and *(b)* the unemployment rate on the same date for each travel-to-work area which had an unemployment rate higher than the average for development areas in Wales, denoting which of the areas have in their territory a development area.

Mr. David Hunt: The information requested is given in the table:

	Per cent.[1]	*Status*
(a) Average for development areas in Wales	7·1	
(b) Travel-to-work areas with a higher unemployment rate than the average for the development areas in Wales:		
Aberdare	10·3	DA
Holyhead	9·7	DA
Merthyr and Rhymney	9·4	DA
Bangor and Caernarfon	9·0	IA
Blaenau Gwent and Abergavenny	8·5	DA
South Pembrokeshire	8·1	DA
Llanelli	8·0	IA
Pwllheli	7·6	IA
Pontypridd and Rhondda	7·5	DA
Haverfordwest	7·4	IA

[1] Workforce-based unemployment rate, per cent., April 1990.
DA denotes development area.
IA denotes intermediate area.

Note: Development areas are defined in terms of "Travel-to-Work areas".

Schools (Spending)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total capital spending in Welsh schools in current prices in each year from 1979-80 to 1988-89.

Mr. Roberts: The information requested is given in the following table:

Total capital expenditure on Welsh schools in 1988-89 prices

	£000
1979-80	32,906
1980-81	41,026
1981-82	34,726
1982-83	36,810
1983-84	34,823
1984-85	30,323
1985-86	26,767
1986-87	32,786
1987-88	38,393
1988-89	37,568

Source: Capital Outturn Returns.

Further and Higher Education

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many school leavers in Wales in total and in percentage terms entered *(a)* further and *(b)* higher education in 1979, 1988 and 1989.

Mr. Roberts: The latest available data on the first destination of school leavers are for the academic year 1987-88. They are not however available in the form requested. The following table gives the number and percentages of school leavers entering degree and teacher training courses and other further and higher education.

	1979-80	*1987-88*
Number of school leavers with intended destination[1]:		
Degree and teacher training courses	3,850	3,970
Other further and higher education courses	7,005	9,620
Leavers' destinations as a percentage of all leavers[1]:		
Degree and teacher training courses	9	10
Other further and higher education courses	15	24

[1] School leavers survey. This is a 10 per cent. sample survey and therefore the data will be subject to sampling error.

North Wales Expressway

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the total cost of constructing the north Wales expressway; and if he will publish information on the anticipated traffic volumes on this road, after completion, by category of users.

Mr. Roberts: Total expenditure on dualling the A55 is estimated at around £620 million. Estimates of anticipated traffic volumes for 15 years after opening have been or will be published for each section of the route as part of the evidence put before the public inquiry. Current annual average daily traffic flows on the A55 range between 15,000 and 30,000 vehicles, of which 8 to 10 per cent. are heavy goods vehicles.

Care and Repair Schemes

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many care and repair schemes are currently operative in Wales; and if he will make a statement on the future funding of such schemes.

Mr. Grist: Since March 1987 our Department has helped to establish 15 home improvement agencies in Wales. Ten schemes are funded by our Department under the care and repair agencies initiative and the remaining five from other sources of Welsh Office funding. Two further agencies are operating independently.

The performance of home improvement agencies has been monitored over the past three years by the school for advanced urban studies in Bristol and we are currently studying its conclusions. We will decide shortly on the future of existing agencies and their possible further development.

Motor Neurone Disease

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much assistance his Department gave by way of grant to the Motor Neurone Disease Association during 1989-90; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: None.

Physically Handicapped People

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing, in current money equivalent terms, the spending by social services departments in Wales on services for registered physically handicapped people during 1988-89 and for each of the previous 10 years, together with the number of such people who were beneficiaries of these services in each year and the corresponding average spending per assisted case.

Mr. Grist: The information available on spending is given in the tables:

Local authority expenditure on physically disabled[1]

	£ million at 1988-89 prices
1978-79	4·7
1979-80	4·4
1980-81	4·2
1981-82	4·1
1982-83	4·0
1983-84	4·8
1984-85	[2]—
1985-86	3·8
1986-87	4·1
1987-88	[3]4·6
1988-89	[3]4·8

[1] Excludes expenditure on day care. Data for 1978-79 and 1986-87 are estimated from outturn information shown in the Local Authority Social Services Planning Statements for Wales. These figures may include some expenditure on the elderly.

[2] Not available.

[3] Information for 1987-88 and 1988-89 was collected on a different basis and is not strictly comparable with earlier years.

Information relating to the receipt of services provided by social services departments is as follows:

	Number of residents under the age of 65 supported by local authorities[1,2]	*Cases of assistance provided by Social Services Departments*[3,4]
1979	720	28,707
1980	689	28,418
1981	634	25,293
1982	630	26,920
1983	583	31,290
1984	599	41,659
1985	548	39,312
1986	417	42,423
1987	416	44,510
1988	404	45,285
1989	418	47,730

[1] In local authority, private and voluntary homes. Some of these residents may not be physically disabled.

[2] As at 31 March.

[3] Telephone rentals, personal equipment, adaptations to property, holidays etc. Information given relates to cases as opposed to beneficiaries (an individual beneficiary may receive more than one case of assistance). Figures quoted include all age groups and relate to assistance provided to both physically disabled people and other client groups.

[4] Year ending 31 March.

It is not statistically meaningful to calculate average spending per assisted case because of the differing natures of the various services provided. These services vary from smaller forms of assistance, such as the provision of personal aids, through to the long-term support in residential care.

School Leavers

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many school leavers in Wales have entered full-time employment annually in total and percentage terms for each year from 1979.

Mr. Roberts: The numbers and percentages of those school leavers in Wales entering full-time employment are given in the table:

School leavers intending to enter the labour market[1]

	Number	*Percentage of all leavers*
1979-80	34,270	76
1980-81	32,040	73
1981-82	32,195	71
1982-83	31,410	69
1983-84	30,950	70
1984-85	30,610	69
1985-86	29,840	69

	Number	Percentage of all leavers
1986-87	29,915	68
1987-88	27,015	66

[1]Including leavers whose destination is unknown.
Source: School Leavers Survey. This is on a 10 per cent. sample and therefore the data will be subject to sampling error.

Hospital Closures

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what redress there is if a health authority that is counselling the closure of a hospital fails to conform with the provisions of planning paper V, entitled "Procedure for Consultation on the Closure and Change of Use of Health Buildings".

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my reply of 16 May 1990, column *479-80*. In addition, it is open to people or bodies who consider that they have not been properly consulted under the terms of service planning paper 5 to make an application to the High Court for a judicial review of the health authority's actions.

Pupil Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the maintained school pupil population in Wales and by local education authority, in separate tables for primary, secondary and all pupils *(a)* in 1988 and *(b)* projected for 1995 and 2000.

Mr. Roberts: The information requested is given in the following tables:

Number of pupils in maintained primary schools in Wales (thousands)

Welsh Counties	1988-89	1995-96	2000-01
Clwyd	38·7	41·9	44·3
Dyfed	31·9	34·4	36·0
Gwent	41·4	44·9	47·3
Gwynedd	20·0	20·2	22·2
Mid Glamorgan	54·1	57·3	60·7
Powys	10·2	10·8	11·3
South Glamorgan	36·0	39·9	43·1
West Glamorgan	36·2	37·5	39·1
Wales	268·5	286·9	304·0

Number of pupils in maintained secondary schools in Wales (thousands)

West Counties	1988-89	1995-96	2000-01
Clwyd	27·4	27·4	28·6
Dyfed	23·7	24·7	25·9
Gwent	29·2	29·6	31·2
Gwynedd	16·4	16·3	16·5
Mid Glamorgan	37·5	37·1	39·0
Powys	8·0	7·8	8·0
South Glamorgan	26·6	27·9	30·3
West Glamorgan	23·2	23·6	24·3
Wales	192·0	194·4	203·8

Numbers of pupils in all maintained schools in Wales[1] (thousands)

Welsh Counties	1988-89	1995-96	2000-01
Clwyd	66·4	69·7	73·2
Dyfed	55·8	59·3	62·1
Gwent	71·8	75·7	79·6
Gwynedd	36·3	37·1	38·8
Mid Glamorgan	92·9	95·8	101·1
Powys	18·2	18·7	19·3
South Glamorgan	63·4	68·7	74·3
West Glamorgan	59·6	61·4	63·6
Wales	464·4	486·4	512·0

[1]Includes maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools.

Teachers

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the full-time equivalent number of teachers in Wales and in each Welsh local education authority, by Burnham scale and sex.

Mr. Roberts: The number of teachers receiving incentive allowances at March 1988 is given in the following table.

The Burnham scale has been replaced in schools by the school teachers pay and conditions document.

Male Teachers — *LEA*

Salary Scale	Clwyd	Dyfed	Gwent	Gwynedd	Mid Glam	Powys	S. Glam	W. Glam	WALES
Head	236	255	166	187	208	96	118	140	1,406
Deputy	146	99	145	99	190	32	117	131	959
2nd M&M	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
Main Scale & E	85	16	78	21	92	9	63	44	408
Main Scale & D	197	156	163	79	172	35	155	137	1,094
Main Scale & C	14	13	49	3	1	1	7	17	105
Main Scale & B	345	304	319	232	533	125	314	287	2,459
Main Scale & A	34	18	61	26	1	22	41	38	241
Main Scale & None	404	390	533	301	809	149	383	433	3,402
Other	1	1	1	2	6	1	3	0	15
Total	1,462	1,252	1,515	950	2,014	470	1,201	1,227	10,091

Female Teachers — *LEA*

Salary Scale	Clwyd	Dyfed	Gwent	Gwynedd	Mid Glam	Powys	S. Glam	W. Glam	WALES
Head	88	126	127	45	180	42	94	73	775
Deputy	163	159	149	78	245	50	140	106	1,090
2nd M&M	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Main Scale & E	10	5	15	5	30	1	11	14	91
Main Scale & D	72	37	60	24	62	5	62	42	364

Salary Scale	Clwyd	Dyfed	Gwent	Gwynedd	Mid Glam	Powys	S. Glam	W. Glam	WALES
Main Scale & C	7	5	35	3	2	0	4	6	62
Main Scale & B	403	339	345	177	430	75	303	410	2,482
Main Scale & A	89	30	110	46	5	29	121	121	551
Main Scale & None	1,110	1,246	1,540	874	2,284	457	1,365	1,353	10,229
Other	3	1	4	2	12	4	4	1	31
Total	1,945	1,948	2,385	1,254	3,251	663	2,104	2,126	15,676

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, by education authority and for Wales as a whole, what is the number and percentage of teachers by sex with *(a)* less than one year, *(b)* one year, *(c)* two years, *(d)* three years, *(e)* four years, *(f)* five years, *(g)* six to 10 years, *(h)* 11 to 15 years and *(i)* over 16 years teaching experience in their current school.

Mr. Roberts: The information requested is available only in the form of estimates produced from the 1987 primary schools staffing survey and the 1989 secondary schools staffing survey, and is provided in the following tables:

Teachers in primary schools

Local authority	Experience in present school[1] Less than 1 year (per cent.)	1 year (per cent.)	2 years (per cent.)	3 years (per cent.)	4 years (per cent.)	5 years (per cent.)	6-10 years (per cent.)	11-15 years (per cent.)	More than 15 years (per cent.)	Total (per cent.)	Total (thousands)
Male											
Clwyd	4·5	7·9	7·4	15·8	4·0	6·7	25·7	11·4	16·6	100	0·4
Dyfed	6·6	12·3	16·2	6·3	6·9	6·1	15·0	12·9	17·4	100	0·3
Gwent	12·5	8·7	16·3	9·4	3·4	6·5	15·2	17·0	11·0	100	0·4
Gwynedd	4·5	10·4	7·5	4·5	10·1	5·2	28·0	9·7	20·1	100	0·3
Mid Glamorgan	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Powys	7·5	6·7	8·2	11·2	8·2	4·5	20·1	16·4	17·2	100	0·1
South Glamorgan	9·5	8·7	12·0	7·4	8·7	14·0	17·4	12·0	10·3	100	0·2
West Glamorgan	14·7	13·5	6·9	5·8	5·8	3·7	23·1	15·0	11·5	100	0·3
Total[2]	8·9	9·8	10·9	8·9	6·0	6·8	20·6	13·6	14·4	100	2·7
Female											
Clwyd	7·0	7·1	10·2	5·6	4·7	5·4	29·2	13·5	17·3	100	1·3
Dyfed	14·9	8·3	7·5	5·9	6·0	6·1	18·6	16·2	16·5	100	1·2
Gwent	11·2	10·2	10·9	8·1	6·3	4·4	16·9	17·1	14·8	100	1·5
Gwynedd	11·2	8·1	8·2	7·6	6·3	3·4	19·7	16·9	18·6	100	0·7
Mid Glamorgan	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Powys	12·6	13·1	7·7	5·4	5·6	4·2	17·1	16·6	17·6	100	0·4
South Glamorgan	20·9	8·4	8·4	6·9	4·8	3·8	19·0	15·3	12·4	100	1·4
West Glamorgan	19·8	8·0	6·3	6·0	6·7	4·7	14·3	18·7	15·7	100	1·5
Total[2]	14·5	8·6	8·5	6·6	5·9	4·6	19·1	16·5	15·7	100	9·9

[1] These figures are based on primary school staffing survey carried out in March 1987. Only 32 per cent. of teachers responded to the survey and thus figures shown are estimates based on grossed data.
[2] No data is available for Mid Glamorgan but the Wales totals include an estimate for the county.
n/a = Not available.

Teachers in secondary schools[1]

Local authority	Experience in present school Less than 1 year (per cent.)	1 year (per cent.)	2 years (per cent.)	3 years (per cent.)	4 years (per cent.)	5 years (per cent.)	6-10 years (per cent.)	11-15 years (per cent.)	More than 15 years (per cent.)	Total (per cent.)	Total (thousands)
Male											
Clwyd	8·3	5·3	5·7	6·6	3·7	5·5	21·1	20·4	23·4	100	1·0
Dyfed	5·8	5·0	4·5	5·3	5·9	6·9	20·7	23·2	22·7	100	0·8
Gwent	5·2	3·7	5·4	5·1	3·9	4·8	22·0	26·2	23·9	100	1·0
Gwynedd	5·8	5·3	4·2	4·1	6·3	4·5	24·7	17·0	28·1	100	0·6
Mid Glamorgan	5·4	4·4	3·6	2·8	4·1	6·4	21·2	23·5	28·5	100	1·3
Powys	12·6	4·5	4·9	5·5	4·9	6·5	14·9	16·8	29·4	100	0·3
South Glamorgan	6·2	7·4	3·9	4·4	4·0	3·8	17·2	23·3	29·9	100	0·8
West Glamorgan	5·6	4·3	6·1	7·8	4·3	3·3	19·3	23·2	26·3	100	0·8
Total	6·3	4·9	4·8	5·0	4·5	5·2	20·6	22·4	26·3	100	6·6
Female											
Clwyd	13·4	7·1	7·1	5·8	6·8	5·8	26·3	18·1	9·7	100	0·8
Dyfed	18·0	7·7	6·1	6·3	4·7	6·5	18·8	15·7	16·1	100	0·8
Gwent	14·8	8·3	7·4	4·5	4·6	4·1	22·7	17·9	15·7	100	1·0
Gwynedd	13·4	7·3	4·4	5·3	4·5	7·1	25·6	15·4	17·1	100	0·6
Mid Glamorgan	8·5	8·7	5·1	5·0	3·8	6·4	23·6	20·1	18·7	100	1·1
Powys	22·4	8·3	5·8	8·7	2·5	5·1	20·6	8·7	18·1	100	0·3
South Glamorgan	18·1	10·1	7·0	4·7	5·6	4·2	20·5	16·9	12·9	100	0·8
West Glamorgan	15·4	4·9	7·0	5·0	4·6	4·0	19·9	19·9	19·3	100	0·8
Total	14·6	7·8	6·3	5·3	4·8	5·4	22·4	17·5	15·8	100	6·2

[1] These figures are based on secondary school staffing survey carried out in February 1989. Seventy-eight per cent. of teachers responded to the survey and thus figures shown are estimates based on grossed data.

Training

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 11 January, *Official Report*, column *724*, if he will provide the latest available figures on trainees undergoing employment training and training scheme vacancies by county.

Mr. David Hunt: The information requested is shown in the table:

County	*Total numbers on employment training at 31 March 1990*
Mid Glamorgan	2,975
South Glamorgan	1,975
Gwent	2,536
Dyfed	2,466
West Glamorgan	2,125
Clwyd	2,196
Powys	493
Gwynedd	1,163

The figures given in my right hon. Friend's reply of 11 January on unfilled places are the latest available.

Urban Aid Grants

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will make suitable financial arrangements to ensure *(a)* that successful applicants for urban aid grants in 1990-91 have adequate time to undertake the work set out in their application and *(b)* that carry-over arrangements arising from this year's late grant decisions are (i) sympathetic to the problems that applicants may have and *(b)* funded in full by his Department.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on Monday 21 May.

Homelessness (Grants)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the organisations to which he has given *(a)* an increase in grant and *(b)* a decrease in grant in 1990-91 compared with 1989-90 under the system of grants to voluntary organisations working in the field of homelessness together with the actual change and percentage change in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Our Department has given substantial increases in grant to the three voluntary organisations which tackle homelessness on a strategic level. Not including any supplementary grants given in 1989-90, the figures are as follows:

	1989-90	*1990-91*	*Differences*	*Per cent. increase*
Shelter	59,115	114,684	+55,569	48
Welsh Womens Aid (WWA)	41,832	63,286	+21,454	34
Swansea Accommodation for the single homeless (SASH)	35,591	71,150	+35,559	50

Further resources have been made available for this financial year specifically for new initiatives by voluntary bodies in helping to tackle homelessness on a strategic level.

River Pollution

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the convictions for river pollution in Wales and, in each case, show the contravention, the polluter and the river polluted.

Mr. Grist: This is a matter for the National Rivers Authority.

Cheese

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the marketing of Welsh cheese.

Mr. David Hunt: I take every opportunity to urge all Welsh producers to improve the marketing and presentation of their products. The Welsh Development Agency, through its Welsh food initiative, assists food producers to market their products. "Good Food from Wales", compiled by the Welsh food initiative, includes 28 cheese companies.

Health Authorities

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what criteria are used by his Department to measure the efficiency of health authorities, and facilities within health authorities in Wales.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Gentleman to section VI of the "Corporate Management Programme for the Health Service in Wales", a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

The corporate management programme is currently being developed to take account of the changes proposed in the White Papers "Working for Patients" and "Caring for People".

General Practitioners

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many general practitioners there are in each health district in Wales on the latest available information; and how many registered patients there are in each such area.

Mr. Grist: The latest available information is given in the following table:

Family Practitioner Committee	*Number of principals*[1]	*Registered patients*[2]
Clwyd	214	415,469
Dyfed	206	354,261
Gwent	241	456,739
Gwynedd	147	242,277
Mid Glamorgan	295	560,040
Powys	76	123,820
South Glamorgan	226	426,692
West Glamorgan	194	380,580

[1] Unrestricted principals as at 1 October 1988

[2] Number of patients on lists of unrestricted principals for whom the FPC was responsible.

Registered Child Minders

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many registered child minders there are in Wales.

Mr. Grist: The number of registered child minders in Wales as at 31 March 1989 is 3,448.

Health Service (Catering)

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the cost of catering provisions per patient per day in each Welsh health authority in each year since 1979, expressed in cash and constant prices.

Mr. Grist: The available information is shown in the following table, for 1987-88 and 1988-89. Figures for the years before 1987-88 are not readily available.

	1987-8		*1988-89*
	actual £	*constant*[1] £	*actual* £
Clwyd	1·49	1·60	1·63
East Dyfed	1·64	1·76	1·50
Gwent	1·64	1·76	1·77
Gwynedd	1·66	1·78	1·73
Mid Glamorgan	1·85	1·98	1·83
Powys	1·46	1·56	1·69
South Glamorgan	1·49	1·60	1·57
West Glamorgan	1·63	1·75	1·83
Pembrokeshire[2]	—	—	—
Wales	1·60	1·71	1·67

[1] Revalued to 1988-89 prices using the GDP deflator.
[2] Not available as catering is 'contracted out'.

Cardiff Shooting Range

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) on what date the factories inspectorate was called to visit the national sports centre for Wales; when the visit took place; and what reports were made;

(2) on what dates the Health and Safety Executive was called to visit the national sports centre, Cardiff shooting range; for what reasons it visited; and what reports were received.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 14 May 1990]:* Staff of the factory inspectorate, an arm of the Health and Safety Executive, visited the shooting range at the national sports centre, Cardiff on 6 May 1988 and subsequent occasions. The recommendations by the inspectorate and subsequent action taken are matters for the Sports Council for Wales, and I have arranged for the hon. Gentleman's questions to be drawn to the attention of the council.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales under what circumstances safety inspections of the back plate at the shooting range at the national sports centre for Wales at Cardiff are carried out.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 14 May 1990]:* This is a matter for the Sports Council for Wales which is responsible for the management of the shooting range at the national sports centre, Cardiff and I have arranged for the hon. Gentleman's question to be drawn to the attention of the council.

District Health Authorities

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the relative over or underprovision of revenue to each of the nine district health authorities in Wales for the five years 1984-85 to 1989-90 relative to the RAWG formula, expressed in both money terms and as pecentage variations.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 15 May 1990]:* The information requested in respect of the RAWG revenue formula assessments for the years 1984-85 to 1989-90 is as follows:

District health authorities revenue formula shares
Resource formula for distribution in Wales

	Recurrent allocation	*Residual allocation (after removal of "protected" services from formula assessment)*	*Formula assessment*		*Over (−) Under (+) provision relative to formula assessment*	
			£	*percentage*	£ *million*	*percentage*
1984-85						
Clwyd	71·686	59·848	61·934	13·32	+2·086	+2·9
East Dyfed	44·318	36·215	36·603	7·87	+0·388	+0·9
Pembrokeshire	14·485	13·958	15·548	3·34	+1·590	+11·0
Gwent	89·021	75·972	71·868	15·45	−4·104	−4·6
Gwynedd	43·689	39·277	36·873	7·93	−2·404	−5·5
Mid Glamorgan	102·483	81·544	82·580	17·75	+1·036	+1·0
Powys	20·432	13·203	13·340	2·87	+0·137	+0·7
South Glamorgan	117·123	78·186	78·489	16·88	+0·303	+0·3
West Glamorgan	74·381	66·872	67·840	14·59	+0·968	+1·3
	577·618	465·075	465·075		—	—
						1984-85 prices
1984-86						
Clwyd	76·323	64·226	64·451	13·21	+0·225	+0·3
East Dyfed	47·598	38·748	38·029	7·79	−0·719	−1·5
Pembrokeshire	16·167	15·658	17·055	3·49	+1·397	+8·6
Gwent	93·328	76·283	75·515	15·47	−0·768	−0·8
Gwynedd	45·988	39·952	38·892	7·97	−1·060	−2·3
Mid Glamorgan	108·250	85·455	84·639	17·34	−0·816	−0·8
Powys	21·475	14·484	14·837	3·04	+0·353	+1·6
South Glamorgan	124·125	82·600	85·127	17·45	+2·527	+2·0
West Glamorgan	78·640	70·654	69·515	14·24	−1·139	−1·4
	611·894	488·060	488·060		—	—
						1985-86 prices

	Recurrent allocation	Residual allocation (after removal of "protected" services from formula assessment)	Formula assessment		Over (−) Under (+) provision relative to formula assessment	
			£	percentage	£ million	percentage
1986-87						
Clwyd	77·850	65·212	64·797	13·37	−0·415	−0·5
East Dyfed	48·262	38·755	40·890	8·43	+2·135	+4·4
Pembrokeshire	16·725	16·227	17·636	3·64	+1·409	+8·4
Gwent	94·148	73·673	73·907	15·25	+0·234	+0·2
Gwynedd	46·984	41·429	38·878	8·02	−2·551	−5·4
Mid Glamorgan	110·210	86·449	86·554	17·85	+0·095	+0·1
Powys	21·806	14·582	15·054	3·11	+0·472	+2·2
South Glamorgan	126·507	77·561	79·145	16·33	+1·584	+1·3
West Glamorgan	10·385	70·810	67·847	14·00	−2·963	−3·7
	622·877	484·698	484·698		—	—
						1986-87 prices
1987-88						
Clwyd	82·067	67·919	69·443	13·65	+1·524	+1·9
East Dyfed	51·397	41·314	42·593	8·37	+1·279	−2·5
Pembrokeshire	17·806	17·119	18·828	3·70	+1·709	+9·6
Gwent	99·272	76·428	77·607	15·25	+1·179	+1·2
Gwynedd	49·510	43·416	41·533	8·16	−1·883	−3·8
Mid Glamorgan	117·097	91·857	91·077	17·89	−0·780	−0·7
Powys	23·52	15·662	15·664	3·08	+0·002	—
South Glamorgan	134·535	81·424	80·413	15·80	−1·011	−0·8
West Glamorgan	86·684	73·758	71·739	14·10	−2·019	−2·3
	661·520	508·897	508·897		—	—
						1986-87 prices
1988-89						
Clwyd	87·962	72·259	74·448	13·69	+2·189	+2·5
East Dyfed	55·641	44·365	45·896	8·44	+1·531	+2·8
Pembrokeshire	20·441	19·246	20·314	3·74	+1·068	+5·2
Gwent	106·049	81·616	83·380	15·34	+1·764	+1·7
Gwynedd	53·399	46·065	44·386	8·16	−1·679	−3·1
Mid Glamorgan	124·949	98·184	98·465	18·11	+0·281	+0·2
Powys	24·799	16·371	16·393	3·02	+0·022	+0·1
South Glamorgan	144·113	86·787	84·741	15·59	−2·046	−1·4
West Glamorgan	92·390	78·776	75·646	13·91	−3·130	−3·4
	709·743	543·669	543·669			
						1987-88 prices
1989-90						
Clwyd	101·760	83·408	84·663	13·58	+1·255	+1·2
East Dyfed	65·444	52·105	53·802	8·63	+1·697	+2·6
Pembrokeshire	24·198	22·839	23·254	3·73	+0·415	+1·7
Gwent	121·691	94·752	95·386	15·30	+0·634	+0·5
Gwynedd	61·411	51·914	51·244	8·22	−0·668	−1·1
Mid Glamorgan	143·180	111·655	113·153	18·15	+1·498	+1·0
Powys	28·382	18·181	19·202	3·08	+1·021	+3·6
South Glamorgan	164·856	98·776	96·196	15·43	−2·580	−1·6
West Glamorgan	105·570	89·805	86·533	13·88	−3·272	−3·1
	816·492	623·435	623·435			
						1988-89 prices

Note: Formula assessments taking into account all outstanding funding for this revenue costs of new hospital development.
It should be noted that the authorities' target percentage formula shares have changed over time as a result of demographic changes and also changes to the structure of the formula.

It should also be noted that the assessments are made before the determination of revenue provision for the years in question and therefore each assessment is based on allocations in the year immediately preceding that for which the assessment is made. The assessments are then taken into account in determining allocations for the years in question via the distribution of such funding as is made available for equalisation purposes. This is shown in the following tables which express initial revenue allocations for the years in question in terms of distance from the percentage formula targets given in the previous tables and thus show the impact of equalisation funding in reducing the range of difference from target as between authorities.

Resource formula for distribution in Wales

District health authority	*Recurrent allocation*	*Residual allocation (after removal of "protected" services from formula assessment)*	*Formula assessment*		*Over (−) Under (+) provision relative to formula assessment*	
			£	*percentage*	*£ million*	*percentage*
1984-85						
Clwyd	72·819	60·981	62·587	13·32	+1·606	+2·2
East Dyfed	44·816	36·713	37·023	7·88	+0·310	+0·7
Pembrokeshire	15·359	14·832	15·711	3·34	+0·879	+5·7
Gwent	89·133	76·084	72·622	15·45	−3·462	−3·9
Gwynedd	43·717	39·305	37·261	7·93	−2·044	−4·7
Mid Glamorgan	103·159	82·220	83·451	17·75	+1·231	+1·2
Powys	20·509	13·280	13·480	2·87	+0·200	+1·0
South Glamorgan	118·024	79·087	79·317	16·87	+0·230	+0·2
West Glamorgan	75·015	67·506	68·556	14·59	−1·050	+1·4
	582·551	470·008	470·008	—	—	—
						1984-85 prices
1985-86						
Clwyd	77·337	65·240	65·583	13·20	+0·343	+0·4
East Dyfed	47·904	39·054	38·755	7·80	−0·299	−0·6
Pembrokeshire	16·591	16·082	17·353	3·49	+1·271	+7·7
Gwent	94·041	76·996	76·837	15·47	−0·159	−0·2
Gwynedd	46·768	40·732	39·572	7·97	−1·160	−2·5
Mid Glamorgan	110·182	87·387	86·128	17·35	−1·259	−1·1
Powys	21·678	14·687	15·097	3·04	+0·410	+1·9
South Glamorgan	125·886	84·361	86·623	17·44	+2·262	+1·8
West Glamorgan	80·134	72·148	70·739	14·24	−1·409	−1·8
	620·521	496·687	496·687	—	—	—
						1985-86 prices
1986-87						
Clwyd	82·063	68·856	68·741	13·37	−0·115	−0·1
East Dyfed	51·239	41·304	43·400	8·44	+2·096	+4·1
Pembrokeshire	17·858	17·710	18·710	3·64	+1·372	+7·7
Gwent	99·396	78·000	78·407	15·25	+0·407	+0·4
Gwynedd	49·417	43·612	41·245	8·02	−2·367	−4·8
Mid Glamorgan	116·477	91·647	91·817	17·85	+0·170	+0·1
Powys	23·002	15·453	15·971	3·11	+0·518	+2·3
South Glamorgan	133·578	82·429	83·972	16·32	+1·543	+1·2
West Glamorgan	85·615	75·609	71·985	14·00	−3·624	−4·2
	658·645	514·248	514·248		—	—
						1986-87 prices
1987-88						
Clwyd	87·433	72·779	74·669	13·64	+1·890	+2·2
East Dyfed	54·555	44·408	45·849	8·38	+1·441	+2·6
Pembrokeshire	20·110	19·397	20·244	3·70	+0·847	+4·2
Gwent	105·568	81·999	83·447	15·25	+1·448	+1·4
Gwynedd	52·599	46·276	44·659	8·16	−1·617	−3·1
Mid Glamorgan	124·401	98·214	97·931	17·89	−0·283	−0·2
Powys	24·751	16·980	16·843	3·08	−0·137	−0·6
South Glamorgan	142·742	88·537	86·464	15·80	−2·073	−1·5
West Glamorgan	92·048	78·653	77·137	14·10	−1·516	−1·6
	704·207	547·243	547·243		—	—
						1987-88 prices
1988-89						
Clwyd	95·180	78·331	80·588	13·67	+2·257	+2·4
East Dyfed	59·759	49·486	50·699	8·60	+1·213	+2·0
Pembrokeshire	22·674	21·395	21·989	3·735	+0·594	+2·6
Gwent	114·532	88·223	90·257	15·31	+2·034	+1·8
Gwynedd	57·787	49·593	48·047	8·15	−1·546	−2·7
Mid Glamorgan	134·733	106·044	106·586	18·08	+0·542	+0·4
Powys	26,978	17·836	17·745	3·01	−0·091	−0·3
South Glamorgan	154·986	93·931	91·730	15·56	−2·201	−1·4
West Glamorgan	99·349	84·687	81·885	13·89	−2.802	−2·8
	765·978	589·526	589·526	—	—	—
						1988-90 prices
1989-90						
Clwyd	106·334	87·161	88·189	13·58	+1·028	+1·0
East Dyfed	68·872	55·376	56·043	8·63	+0·667	+1·0
Pembrokeshire	25·383	23·977	24·223	3·73	+0·246	+1·0

District health authority	Recurrent allocation	Residual allocation (after removal of "protected" services from formula assessment)	Formula assessment		Over (−) Under (+) provision relative to formula assessment	
			£	percentage	£ million	percentage
Gwent	126·560	98·505	99·358	15·30	+0·853	+0·7
Gwynedd	63·703	53·893	53·381	8·22	−0·512	−0·8
Mid Glamorgan	148·905	116·411	117·866	15·15	+1·455	+1·0
Powys	30·321	19·707	20·001	3·08	+0·294	+1·0
South Glamorgan	170·561	101·081	100·202	15·43	−0·879	−0·5
West Glamorgan	109·590	93·289	90·137	13·88	−3·152	−2·9
	850·229	649·400	649·400	—	—	—
						1989-90 prices

Note: Formula assessment taking into account all outstanding funding for this revenue cost of new capital development.

Crown Offices

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many Crown offices in Wales have been *(a)* closed and *(b)* regraded following the setting up of the franchising programme for the Post Office counter business.

Mr. Forth: I have been asked to reply.

I understand that no Crown offices have been closed in the Principality, and that 14 Crown offices have been regraded as part of the Post Office's network conversion programme.

PRIME MINISTER

Local Government Finance

Q31. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Prime Minister what progress is being made with the Government's review of the operation of the community charge.

The Prime Minister: The Government are taking into account the various suggestions which have been made on the operation of the community charge and will announce the results of the review in due course.

German Unification

Q88. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the cost to member states of the reunification of Germany within the European Economic Community; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: This matter was considered at the informal summit on 28 April about which I informed the House on 1 May. The financial effects of the integration into the Economic Community of the territory which is now the German Democratic Republic are inevitably uncertain, given the lack of any reliable economic statistics for the German Democratic Republic, the unknown timing of unification, and the inevitable unreliability of present estimates of the likely effect on the German Democratic Republic economy of *(a)* German economic and monetary union this summer and *(b)* unification, and hence Economic Community entry, next year or later.

Welsh Office

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Prime Minister if she will appoint an additional Parliamentary Under-Secretary in the Welsh Office.

The Prime Minister: No. I am satisfied that my right hon. Friend has a very experienced ministerial team well able to cover the full range of its responsibilities.

Engagements

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 22 May.

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 22 May.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 22 May.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 22 May.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 22 May.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 22 May.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House. I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an Audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Advisers

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Prime Minister what was the total cost of the Prime Minister's advisers who were not career civil servants for each year since 1981, expressed in real terms.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 21 May 1990]:* The expenditure on my advisers who are not career civil servants for each year since 1981, expressed in real terms, is as follows:

Year	£
1981	55,453
1982	109,286
1983	169,237

Year	£
1984	92,771
1985	129,261
1986	141,683
1987	173,116
1988	141,965
1989	214,807

SOCIAL SECURITY

Income Support

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people are currently on income support in Ealing; what was the comparable figure five years ago; what percentage of the population this represents in each case; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The London borough of Ealing is served by Ealing district office but the boundaries are not conterminous. From 4 February 1990 Ealing district office took responsibility for income support work previously undertaken by the Department's local offices at Acton, Ealing, Notting Hill and Southall. The comparable figures for the district office area are as follows:

Number of supplementary benefit/income support claimants[1]

Date	Number
February 1985	47,855
February 1990	37,039

[1] *Source:* 100 per cent. count of cases in action which include a number where payment has ceased but other action is continuing. Data for February 1990 is provisional and subject to amendment.

Data on the total population by DSS office area are unavailable.

Benefits, Northamptonshire

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of people presently receiving and the estimated cost to each local authority in Northamptonshire of *(a)* housing benefit and *(b)* income support and housing benefit; and what comparable figures he has for 12 months ago.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Information for the current financial year is not comparable with 1989-90 because rate rebates in housing benefit have been replaced by community charge benefit. A count of the numbers receiving benefits on 31 May 1990 will be taken by local authorities with the result becoming available later in the summer. The local authority initial estimates of 1990-91 total expenditure on housing benefit and community charge benefit are in the table. I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to him on 5 March at col. *527* which gave information for 1989-90.

Housing benefit and community charge benefit
Local authority initial expenditure estimates 1990-91

	£ million
Corby	n/a
Daventry	3·8
East Northampton	4·0
Kettering	6·1
Northampton	15·2
South Northants	2·7
Wellingborough	6·2

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a chart or table showing unemployment benefit as a percentage of average earnings for the years 1972, 1982, 1987 and 1989 *(a)* for a worker with two children and *(b)* for a single worker tabulated against equivalent figures in each case for European Community countries.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information for Great Britain is shown in the table. Equivalent information for other European Community countries is not available.

Year	Gross average weekly earnings + family allowance/child benefit £	Net income after deducting tax and NI contribution £	Standard rate of unemployment benefit + family allowance/child benefit £	Net income as percentage of earnings + family allowance/child benefit Per cent.	Benefit as percentage of net income Per cent.
(a) Married couple with 2 children					
October 1972	40·60	32·50	15·10	80·0	46·5
November 1982	172·30	124·20	52·75	72·1	42·5
April 1987	238·50	177·50	65·35	74·4	36·8
April 1989	284·00	213·40	70·60	75·1	33·1
(b) Single person (family allowance/child benefit does not apply)					
October 1972	39·70	28·80	6·75	72·5	23·4
November 1982	160·60	107·40	25·00	66·9	23·3
April 1987	224·00	155·90	31·45	69·6	20·2
April 1989	269·50	191·30	34·70	71·0	18·1

Note: Figures taken from the Abstract of Statistics for Index of Retail Prices Average Earnings Social Security Benefits and Contributions, Table 6.1b, except for revised figures for April 1989, which will be published in August 1990.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Overseas Voters

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the actual expenditure per head of British citizens on advertising the rights of overseas voters under the Representation of the People Act 1989, for each overseas country, in 1989-90; if he will give a detailed breakdown of expenditure in South Africa by press, television and radio; and if he will give the apportionment of expenditure in South Africa by ethnic grouping.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The table gives estimates of the expenditure per head on publicity/advertising in each country, based on estimates of the number of British citizens living in each country who are likely to have spent less than 20 years there.

In South Africa, advertisements are being placed in *The Star* (Johannesburg), the *Sunday Times* (Johannesburg), *The Argus* (Cape Town), the *Cape Times* and the *Daily News* (Durban), costing a total of £7,676. In addition, a total of £2,250 has been allocated to diplomatic posts in South Africa for local publicity or advertising. No advertising is being done on radio or television.

The advertising and publicity in South Africa is aimed at British citizens living there; expenditure has not been apportioned on the basis of ethnic grouping.

Electoral registration overseas: Estimated expenditure per eligible British citizen, by country, of Home Office/Foreign and Commonwealth Office expenditure on publicity/advertising in 1990-91

Country	Expenditure per head £
Algeria	8·81
Angola	0·75
Antigua	6·50
Argentina	1·24
Ascension	0·32
Australia	0·06
Austria	1·33
Bahamas	0·30
Bahrain	0·18
Bangladesh	3·66
Barbados	0·48
Belgium	0·07
Belize	2·50
Benin	0·10
Bermuda	0·86
Botswana	0·14
Brazil	1·65
Brunei	0·32
Bulgaria	0·50
Burma	0·66
Cameroon	0·10
Canada	0·04
Canary Islands	0·15
Cayman Islands	0·02
Chile	1·60
China	2·65
Colombia	1·50
Costa Rica	1·25
Cuba	2·50
Cyprus	2·47
Czechoslovakia	5·00
Denmark	0·26
East Germany	0·43
Ecuador	2·08
El Salvador	12·50
Egypt	0·17
Ethiopia	0·33
Falkland Islands	0·74
Fiji	0·83
Finland	7·33
France	0·12
Gabon	0·75
Gambia	8·33
Ghana	0·04
Gibraltar	0·55
Greece	0·38
Grenada	0·33
Guatemala	5·00
Guinea	4·60
Guinea-Bissau	0·50
Guyana	1·23
Honduras	2·22
Hong Kong	0·21
Hungary	0·11
Ireland	2·38
India	0·50
Indonesia	1·03
Israel	0·10
Italy	1·06
Ivory Coast	0·02
Jamaica	1·03
Japan	16·41
Jordan	0·20
Kenya	0·37
Kiribati	4·44
Korea	1·56
Kuwait	0·34
Lebanon	0·22
Leeward Islands	0·10
Lesotho	0·42
Liberia	1·38
Luxembourg	0·60
Madagascar	0·90
Malawi	0·08
Malaysia	0·43
Malta	0·80
Mauritius	0·22
Mexico	1·15
Montserrat	1·00
Morocco	3·07
Mozambique	0·29
Nepal	0·20
Netherlands	0·39
New Zealand	0·03
Nicaragua	0·60
Nigeria	0·44
North Yemen	1·43
Norway	0·50
Oman	0·36
Pakistan	1·15
Panama	2·50
Papua New Guinea	0·52
Paraguay	2·00
Peru	5·30
Philippines	2·23
Poland	0·20
Portugal	0·44
Qatar	0·25
Republic of Ireland	0·01
Romania	5·00
St. Helena	0·10
St. Kitts	0·25
St. Vincent	0·19
Saudi Arabia	0·17
Senegal	5·89
Seychelles	0·67
Singapore	0·77
Solomon Islands	0·38
Somalia	0·07
South Africa	0·05
Spain	0·39
Sri Lanka	0·10
Sudan	0·05

Country	Expenditure per head £
Swaziland	0·18
Sweden	0·29
Switzerland	0·42
Syria	1·73
Tanzania	0·18
Thailand	0·83
Tonga	0·10
Trinidad	1·03
Tristan da Cunha	1·10
Tunisia	6·13
Turkey	1·56
Turks and Caicos Islands	0·10
Uganda	0·82
United Arab Emirates	0·15
Uruguay	0·50
United States of America	0·09
USSR	0·75
Vanuatu	0·33
Venezuela	0·33
Vietnam	7·50
Virgin Islands	1·36
West Germany	0·30
Yugoslavia	4·75
Zaire	1·50
Zambia	0·31
Zimbabwe	0·22

Unsolved Crimes

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the number and percentage of crimes that are unsolved in each police force for each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement on his assessment of the main reasons for such unsolved crimes.

Mr. John Patten: The readily available information is the number and percentage of recorded crimes that were cleared up in each police force area in 1986-89. For 1986-88 the information is published in tables 2.18 and 2.19 of "Criminal statistics, England and Wales". For 1989 the information is given in the following table. Although there are many reasons why crimes are not solved, a major factor is likely to be inadequate information or evidence on which to base further inquiries.

Notifiable offences recorded by the police which were cleared up by police force area
England and Wales 1989

Police force area	Number cleared up	Percentage cleared up
Avon and Somerset	32,135	33
Bedfordshire	13,592	34
Cambridgeshire	13,707	38
Cheshire	23,121	52
Cleveland	21,029	36
Cumbria	13,343	49
Derbyshire	16,621	37
Devon and Cornwall	26,848	36
Dorset	16,520	42
Durham	17,622	42
Essex	23,814	32
Gloucestershire	12,496	36
Greater Manchester	82,227	30
Hampshire	31,023	32
Hertfordshire	17,678	44
Humberside	31,073	35
Kent	25,350	32
Lancashire	31,011	40
Leicestershire	21,345	40
Lincolnshire	14,276	42
London, City of	1,424	20
Merseyside	57,670	45
Metropolitan Police District	127,984	17
Norfolk	17,671	40
Northamptonshire	16,264	43
Northumbria	67,880	40
North Yorkshire	12,092	35
Nottinghamshire	35,607	35
South Yorkshire	39,222	43
Staffordshire	24,874	43
Suffolk	13,222	43
Surrey	10,944	33
Sussex	22,727	31
Thames Valley	39,142	33
Warwickshire	8,697	35
West Mercia	19,290	39
West Midlands	87,225	39

Women Police Officers

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the number of women police officers in the north Wales constabulary area, and the ranks held, showing the appropriate percentage in each case.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The position as at 31 March 1990 was as follows:

Women police officers

Rank	Number	Percentage of strength
Inspector	2	3·0
Sergeant	7	3·3
Constable	127	12·7
TOTAL	136	10·1

NATO Civil Wartime Agencies

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Don Valley on 27 April, *Official Report*, column *362* when he expects an agreement to be drawn up to cover the legal aspects of the proposed employment of United Kingdom civil servants as staff of NATO civil wartime agencies; when he expects agreement to be reached on the status under international law for United Kingdom civil servants and representatives of private industry when they take up their proposed roles as NATO civil wartime agencies staff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: An ad hoc group within NATO headquarters is considering the status and employment of NATO civil wartime agency staff. I am not yet able to say when agreements will be reached.

Emergency Planning

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the organisations involved in civic emergency disaster planning in the United Kingdom.

Mr. John Patten: Planning for peacetime emergencies involves a very wide range of organisations. These include central and local government, emergency services, the public utilities and voluntary organisations, but other organisations may also be involved.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will review the civil emergency disaster planning organisations to bring them under one body; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: In 1989 the Home Office completed a review of the response to civil emergencies. The Government concluded that the prime responsibility for handling particular disasters should remain at the local level but that there should be improved arrangements for co-ordinated emergency planning. These conclusions were announced in a written answer to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) on 15 June 1989 at column *514*.

A civil emergencies adviser was appointed following the review and one of the matters he is considering is how planning procedures might be improved.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by year for the last 10 years in real terms the amount spent on civil defence emergency planning.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested, at 1990-91 prices, is as follows:

	£ thousands
1980-81	62,587
1981-82	51,261
1982-83	78,338
1983-84	93,712
1984-85	93,336
1985-86	109,449
1986-87	111,019
1987-88	116,643
1988-89	122,899
1989-90	[1]129,229

[1] Estimated.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will carry out a review to give fire and civil defence authorities the same statutory powers as county councils in dealing with emergency planning; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Under section 156 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, fire and civil defence authorities have power to incur expenditure in preparing emergency plans for a possible emergency or disaster.

My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans at present to change those arrangements. He has, however, asked his civil emergencies adviser, Mr. Brook, to consider whether there should be a statutory duty on local authorities to plan for peacetime emergencies. His report is awaited.

Prison Deaths

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will detail the circumstances which led to a prisoner dying from burns on 23 March 1989, having been transferred to hospital from Gloucester prison;

(2) if he will detail the circumstances which led to a prisoner dying of drug poisoning in Pentonville prison on 22 March 1989.

Mr. Mellor: I will write to the hon. Member.

Civil Defence

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total amount of civil defence grant aid for staff costs, building work and other costs in financial years from 1983-84 to 1988-89 and projected for 1989-90, received by each metropolitan district.

Mr. John Patten: The total amount of civil defence grant paid to each metropolitan district in respect of the financial years 1985-86 to 1988-89 is shown in the table. Figures for individual districts are not yet available in respect of 1989-90. Figures for 1983-85 could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Total civil defence grant paid in respect of financial years 1985-86 to 1988-89

Metropolitan districts	*1985-86 (£)*	*1986-87 (£)*	*1987-88 (£)*	*1988-89 (£)*
Greater Manchester				
Bolton	3,679	3,757	4,220	4,959
Bury	1,481	2,038	1,801	1,890
Manchester	—	—	—	—
Oldham	1,240	2,000	2,397	3,696
Rochdale	2,407	2,427	2,430	2,527
Salford	970	990	—	—
Stockport	—	—	—	—
Tameside	—	—	—	—
Trafford	3,713	6,244	547	443
Wigan	574	560	416	2,028
Merseyside				
Knowsley	775	1,007	1,005	957
Liverpool	2,405	3,008	3,078	—
St. Helens	—	125	125	—
Sefton	350	350	350	366
Wirral	559	678	599	682
South Yorkshire				
Barnsley	1,283	1,566	1,624	1,515
Doncaster	2,010	2,448	2,840	2,897
Rotherham	1,470	1,419	1,567	1,778
Sheffield	—	—	—	—
Tyne and Wear				
Gateshead	—	—	—	—
Newcastle upon Tyne	1,405	1,406	1,428	1,493
North Tyneside	—	—	—	—
South Tyneside	—	—	—	—
Sunderland	3,784	4,054	4,227	4,061
West Midlands				
Birmingham	—	—	—	—
Coventry	—	—	—	—
Dudley	—	—	—	—
Sandwell	—	—	—	—
Solihull	—	—	—	—
Walsall	—	—	—	—
Wolverhampton	—	—	—	—
West Yorkshire				
Bradford	1,373	1,465	1,549	—
Calderdale	2,455	2,574	3,039	—
Kirklees	[1]—1,557	[1]—15,705	3,445	—
Leeds	949	1,050	1,100	—
Wakefield	—	—	—	—

[1] Income from the sale of premises previously funded by grant aid.

Expatriate Voters

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many expatriates have had a vote registered in the United Kingdom under the 1989 Act; and if he will give a breakdown of the countries where they are resident.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested will not become available until draft electoral registers for 1991-92 are published, on or before 28 November this year.

Metropolitan Police

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the national and international policing functions which are exercised by the Metropolitan police or in premises under their control; and if he will describe the funding arrangements for each.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Immigration

Mr. Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what are the criteria adopted under the present immigration rules in deciding whether the non-United Kingdom spouse of a United Kingdom citizen has the right to settle in the United Kingdom;

(2) whether the non-United Kingdom spouses of British citizens have an absolute right to enter the United Kingdom under the immigration rules;

(3) what right the non-United Kingdom spouse of a United Kingdom citizen who has lived in the United Kingdom for a period of three years has to settle in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Under the immigration rules, a person who wishes to settle in the United Kingdom with a spouse who is a British citizen must hold a current entry clearance granted for that purpose. An applicant must satisfy the entry clearance officer:

a. that the marriage was not entered into primarily to obtain permission to the United Kingdom; and
b. that each of the parties has the intention of living permanently with the other as his or her spouse; and
c. that the parties to the marriage have met; and
d. that there will be adequate accommodation for the parties and their dependants without recourse to public funds in accommodation of their own or which they occupy themselves; and
e. that the parties will be able to maintain themselves and their dependants adequately without recourse to public funds.

A person holding an entry clearance issued for this purpose is normally admitted for an initial period of 12 months and granted settlement at the end of that period provided that the conditions are still met.

The spouse of a British citizen may apply for British citizenship by naturalisation after three years' residence in the United Kingdom. Naturalisation is at the discretion of the Secretary of State. Among other requirements set out in schedule 1 to the British Nationality Act 1981, applicants must be of full age and capacity, good character, and meet specified periods of residence in the United Kingdom.

In 1989, 320 spouses and finance(e)s resident in Hong Kong were granted entry clearances to settle in the United Kingdom on the basis of marriage to British citizens and six applications were refused.

Concessionary Television Licences

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the definition of a common and exclusive boundary, in connection with the regulations covering concessionary television licences for old people.

Mr. Mellor: The Wireless Telegraphy (Broadcast Licence Charges and Exemption) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 1988 require that for the occupants to qualify for concessionary television licences sheltered accommodation must, among other things, comprise a group of at least four dwellings "within a common and exclusive boundary". This is not further defined in statute. Each application is considered on its merits, bearing in mind the intention of the regulations that only sheltered accommodation which is directly comparable to residential homes should qualify.

Animal Experiments

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he has taken to assure himself that experiments carried out by Professor Wilhelm Feldberg and his staff were in accordance with the project licence provided by the Home Office under section 5 of the Animal Scientific Procedures Act 1986.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 14 May 1990]:* My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has been sent a report and an edited video recording concerned with, among other matters, alleged failures of Professor Feldberg's anaesthetic techniques. This material has been passed to the inspectorate and a report will also be prepared for the animal procedures committee. The licences held by Professor Feldberg and his assistant were revoked earlier at their request.

HEALTH

Hospital Accident and Emergency Units

Ms. Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will list the hospital accident and emergency units open in December 1989;

(2) how many existing hospital accident and emergency units are open for less than 24 hours a day.

Mr. Dorrell: The information which has been placed in the Library shows *(a)* the 418 hospital sites which reported that on 31 March 1989 they had an accident and emergency department open a full seven days a week and *(b)* the 91 who reported that they had an accident and emergency department open less than a full seven days per week.

(*Note*:—Data on hours of opening were not received on 2 accident and emergency departments, Hemel Hempstead hospital, NW Herts DHA and St. Richards, Chichester DHA.)

Community Care

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he next expects to meet the Association of Directors of Social Services to discuss community care.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I hold regular formal and informal meetings with the ADSS. No firm date has been arranged for the next meeting.

Ambulance Service (Crewe and Nantwich)

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will initiate an immediate inquiry into the response times of the ambulance service in the Crewe and Nantwich area;

(2) if he will take steps to ensure that sufficient funding is made available to Mersey regional health authority to provide for the urgent recruitment of sufficient ambulance personnel to ensure the provision of an accident and emergency service in the Crewe and Nantwich area;

(3) if he will hold immediate talks with Mersey regional health authority about the provision of emergency ambulance services in the Crewe and Nantwich area.

Mr. Dorrell: Responsibility for ambulance services in Cheshire is a matter for Chester health authority. Resources are allocated to Chester health authority by the Mersey regional health authority taking into account the level and extent of services required in the districts within Cheshire. Chester health authority has recently taken measures to improve the service, including an improvement in response times. The hon. Member may care to contact the chairman of Chester health authority for details.

Medicine Imports

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many licences for parallel imports of medicines have been granted by his Department.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information about the number of licences for parallel imports granted by the Medicines Control Agency is published regularly in *MAIL* (Medicines Act Information Letter). The most recent edition (April 1990) states that as at 31 January 1990, 2,200 licences had been issued. A copy is available in the Library.

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received on the reasons why the new precautionary measures required by the Medicines Control Agency to detect possible counterfeit medicines among parallel imports from European Community member states do not require batch analysis of all such imports.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No formal representations have been received.

District Unit Managers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the last salary pay scale per grade for district and unit administrators and by year for district unit managers since that new title became effective.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The minima and maxima of the salary scales for district administrators in 1985-86 were:

Group	Teaching		Non-teaching	
	Minimum £	Maximum £	Minimum £	Maximum £
DHA 1+	23,656	26,933	—	—
DHA 1	23,247	26,460	22,032	25,343
DHA 2	22,849	25,992	21,112	24,650
DHA 3	22,490	25,722	20,196	24,235

There was no scale specifically for unit administrators, but a range of scales depending on the classification of the unit. In 1985-86 these gave a minimum of £9,137 and a maximum of £23,183.

The pay arrangements introduced for general managers in 1986 are radically different from the old incremental scales for administrators. General managers must be employed on short-term rolling contracts and any increase in their pay depends on performance in achieving their objectives. The table shows the ranges of pay for districts and unit general managers since September 1986.

£

Group	1 September 1986	1 September 1987	1 September 1988	1 September 1989	1 January 1990
District General Managers					
DGM 1					
From	33,500	35,175	37,110	39,520	40,500
To	44,220	46,431	48,985	56,513	58,500
DGM 2					
From	32,000	33,600	35,450	37,750	38,250
To	42,240	44,352	46,794	53,983	55,250
DGM 3					
From	30,500	32,025	33,790	35,990	35,000
To	40,260	42,273	44,603	51,466	50,750
Unit General Managers					
UGM 1					
From	28,000	29,400	31,020	33,040	35,000
To	38,640	40,572	42,808	49,395	50,750
UGM 2					
From	25,500	26,775	28,250	30,090	30,750
To	35,190	36,950	38,985	44,985	44,500
UGM 3					
From	23,000	24,150	25,480	27,140	27,750
To	31,740	33,327	35,162	40,574	40,250
UGM 4					
From	20,000	21,000	22,160	23,600	24,000
To	27,600	28,980	30,581	35,282	34,750
UGM 5					
From	16,500	17,325	18,280	19,470	—
To	22,770	23,909	25,226	29,108	—

Notes:

1. The higher figures shown include the maximum loading for job weight and the maximum possible performance-related pay.
2. The UGM 5 group was merged with UGM 4 from 1 January 1990. This was one of a number of changes introduced to simplify the pay system and make it more flexible.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the change of responsibilities for district and unit administrators when they became district unit managers.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In 1984 following the NHS management inquiry led by Sir Roy Griffiths the Government issued guidance to health authorities to establish the general management function and to identify individual general managers. Health circular HC(84)13 annex C paragraph 4 contained guidance on the responsibilities of these new managers. This superseded health circular HC(80)8 paragraph 23-25 which contained guidance about the responsibilities of district administrators. Information about the responsibilities of unit administrators is contained in the "Administration and Clerical Staff Whitley Council Handbook" (updated 1984) paragraph 504-505. Copies of these documents are available in the Library.

Mentally Handicapped Patients

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has by local authority, and by year, since his Department's policy of releasing mentally handicapped patients into the community, on how many committed suicide.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not collected centrally.

HIV-positive Babies

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list by year for the last five years and by regional health authority the number of babies that have had blood samples taken and been found to be HIV positive.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The table shows the annual national totals reported to the communicable disease surveillance centre. In line with the procedure followed in reports under the AIDS (Control) Act, and to safeguard confidentiality actual figures in the range of one to nine diagnosed in individual regional health authorities are not published.

Reported HIV antibody positive persons aged less than one year[1]

	Number
1985	1
1986	5
1987	9
1988	16
1989	11
1990	5

[1] It should be noted that a positive test from a newborn baby indicates that the mother is infected but whether or not the baby is infected cannot be confirmed by antibody tests for some months.

Creutzfeldt Jakob Dementia

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on what basis he is collating information relating to Creutzfeldt Jakob dementia; if he will publish the latest information that he has; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The Department of Health has funded Dr. R. G. Will of Edinburgh university to investigate all relevant details of United Kingdom cases of Creutzfeldt Jakob disease. The study commenced on 1 May 1990. We will encourage the investigator to make available appropriate information from this study through presentations and publications in the scientific press.

Hip Replacements

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hip replacement operations were performed in 1989; and if he will estimate the average time spent on the waiting list for such an operation.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Health authorities in England reported 45,000 hip replacement operations in 1988-89. In 1985, the latest year for which information is available centrally, the estimated median interval between the time an in-patient was placed on the waiting list and admission to an NHS hospital for this operation was 21 weeks.

Meningitis

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list by district health authority in the counties of Yorkshire and Humberside, the number of cases of meningitis reported during *(a)* 1989 and *(b)* the current year to date.

Mr. Dorrell: The exact information requested is not available.

Notifications of meningitis are made on a local authority basis. It is not possible to accurately aggregate these to district health authority boundaries. Provisional data for those local authorities within Yorkshire and Humberside are shown in the table.

Notifications of all forms of meningitis, and meningococcal meningitis by county/county districts in Yorkshire and Humberside region for 1989 and 1990[1]

Area	*All forms of meningitis*		*Meningococcal meningitis*	
	1989	*1990*[1]	*1989*	*1990*[1]
Yorkshire and Humberside	329	122	106	57
County/County District				
South Yorkshire	94	41	39	16
Barnsley	13	4	6	2
Doncaster	23	10	17	8
Rotherham	20	10	4	3
Sheffield	38	17	12	3
West Yorkshire	148	39	37	19
Bradford	30	13	11	6
Calderdale	14	4	4	4
Kirklees	16	3	9	2
Leeds	66	13	7	5
Wakefield	22	6	6	2
Humberside	59	25	20	13
Boothferry	3	3	2	—
Cleethorpes	2	—	—	—
East Yorkshire	4	5	1	5
East Yorkshire Borough of Beverley	4	4	1	1
Glanford	4	—	—	—
Great Grimsby	6	6	4	5
Holderness	4	—	1	—
Kingston upon Hull	26	7	9	2
Scunthorpe	6	—	2	—
North Yorkshire	28	17	10	9
Craven	1	1	1	—
Hambleton	1	1	—	—
Harrogate	3	2	1	1
Richmondshire	1	3	1	2
Ryedale	2	—	—	—
Scarborough	11	4	1	1
Selby	5	5	3	5
York	4	1	3	—

[1] Provisional data for 1 January to 4 May 1990.

Preventive Health Care

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what resources his Department has allocated to general practitioner training in preventive health care in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not held centrally. However "Health Promotion and the Prevention of Illness" is one of the three subject areas in which GPs must attend courses in order to be eligible for the postgraduate education allowance.

Sight Tests

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if, when he releases the details of the sight tests survey commissioned by his Department, he plans to give details of the age, sex, income, and sampling point location of each respondent.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We expect the survey results to contain details of the age, sex and region of respondents.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on what date in mid-April NOP completed the field work on the sight tests survey commissioned by his Department; and on what date this information was received by his Department.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Field work by NOP was completed on 23 April. The information for analysis was received by the Department of Health on 16 May.

Private Clinics

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the control of advertising by private sector clinics.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am aware of the concern about certain advertising by some clinics. All those connected with the advertising of clinical services have a duty to ensure that people are not misled by false, doubtful or exaggerated claims. Doctors have a particular responsibility in this. I understand that the General Medical Council is considering how best to make it clear that doctors who have any kind of financial or professional relationship with a private clinic bear some responsibility for any advertising it undertakes. I welcome this. In addition my Department has recently agreed with the Advertising Standards Authority that it pays special attention to such advertising and acts against any that breaches the British code of advertising practice. We will also look at the possibility of legislation to control advertising by these clinics.

Smoking

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans the Government have to ban cigarette smoke pollution in public places; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Statutory bans on smoking already apply in certain areas because of safety considerations such as fire risks in the London Underground. In other public areas the Government encourage the introduction of voluntary policies to discourage smoking, for example through the HEA's campaigns. This approach results in good progress being made and policies being tailored to circumstances.

Blood Products

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on the proportion of blood products recently supplied to the National Health Service and recalled by the supplier which has been found to have been poisoned with hepatitis B.

Mr. Dorrell: All donations collected by the blood transfusion service (BTS) are tested for the hepatitis B virus and neither cellular products for patients nor plasma for fractionation and resultant plasma products are issued unless the test is negative. At the fractionation laboratory all plasma pools are tested for hepatitis B and used only if found negative. All plasma products undergo virus inactivation procedures and finished plasma products are tested for hepatitis B and issued only if found negative. All hepatitis B test results on plasma pools and finished products are confirmed by the National Institute for Biological Standards and Control before product release.

In the recent episode to which the question refers, a blood donation which tested negative for hepatitis at the regional transfusion centre was separated and the plasma processed into blood products. The cellular components were transfused into a patient who subsequently contracted hepatitis. As is standard procedure, the original donor was traced, a blood sample taken and retested for hepatitis B by two laboratories. One test gave a marginally positive result. As a precautionary measure, all plasma products derived from this donation were recalled. Because of the various safeguards listed, the risk to patients from use of the products in question is considered to be extremely small.

The quantities recalled, and for comparison the quantities (issued to the NHS) in the last year for which information is available, are as follows:

	Quantities recalled (Vials)	*Quantities issued 1989-90 (Vials)*
Factor VIII	2,500	251,000
Factor IX	500	36,000
Albumin	2,200	279,000

Ambulance Service

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give, for the month of April and for each ambulance service in England *(a)* the amount of overtime worked, by grade and *(b)* the average number of staff employed, by grade, as a whole-time equivalent; and if he will give similar figures for April 1989.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not available centrally.

International Sweeteners Organisation

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many members of the committee on toxicity are consultants to the International Sweeteners Organisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: One member of the Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment acts as a consultant to the International Sweeteners Association. This interest is declared at each committee meeting whenever sweeteners are discussed and is minuted.

SCOTLAND

Fisheries

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information his Department has on the average number of employees per vessel in the Scottish fish catching sector by Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food category vessel size bands.

Mr. Lang: The average number of crew on fishing vessels based in Scotland is as follows:

Registered length of vessel	*Average number of crew*
Under 10 metres	2
10 metres to 39·9 ft	2
40 ft to 59·9 ft	4
60 ft to 79·9 ft	7
80 ft to 109·9 ft	10
110 ft and over	12

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information his Department has on the average earnings of employees in the Scottish fish catching sector by salary grade.

Mr. Lang: My Department conducts an annual survey of the costs and earnings of the Scottish fishing fleet, and this provides guidance on average crews' shares. The traditional share system of crews' remuneration in Scotland does not, however, distinguish between grades.

The latest sample relates to 1989. Provisional results are as follows:

Vessel length	*Number in sample*	*Annual average share per fisherman* £
40 ft—59·9 ft	32	9,510
60 ft—69·9 ft	31	11,110
70 ft—79·9 ft	30	13,980
Over 80 ft	20	19,900

Senior crew members (for example skippers who do not own their vessel and mates) may receive an additional part share. This is normally financed from the share allocated to the boat. Arrangements vary from vessel to vessel and details are not available.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information his Department has on the average earnings of employees in the Scottish fish catching sector by *(a)* region and *(b)* Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food category vessel size bands.

Mr. Lang: Information on average earnings by region is not available. Earnings by vessel size bands were given in my earlier answer of today to the hon. Member.

Health Service Expenditure

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish for each health board area in Scotland figures showing per head of resident population *(a)* the gross revenue spending and *(b)* the capital spending for the year 1989-90 and the corresponding allocations for 1990-91.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Gross revenue spending details for 1989-90 are not yet available. Allocations for 1990-91 per head of resident population are as follows:

Health board	*Revenue* £	*Capital* £
Argyll and Clyde	330	11
Ayrshire and Arran	304	59
Borders	326	14
Dumfries and Galloway	372	10
Fife	303	18
Forth Valley	360	21
Grampian	372	22
Greater Glasgow	550	26
Highland	391	19
Lanarkshire	300	20
Lothian	434	23
Orkney	316	18
Shetland	325	65
Tayside	476	28
Western Isles	353	273

Highland Regional Council

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 5 April, *Official Report*, columns *830-31*, to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) if his consultation invited representations both in favour and opposed to Highland regional council's draft structure plan; and if he will set out in the *Official Report* the terms on which representations were sought.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend was not responsible for the advertisement of Highland regional council's structure plan review; this was a matter for the regional council. As the relevant legislation requires, the council invited objections to the plan, indicating that they should be made in writing to the secretary of the Scottish Development Department before 2 March 1990.

Department of the Registers of Scotland

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what specific, financial, efficiency and quality of service targets he has approved for the Department of the Registers of Scotland for the current year and for the longer term.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer my right hon. and learned Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) on 5 April, at columns *829-30*.

Takare Contract

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if, further to his reply of 2 May to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen, *Official Report*, column *581*, he is able to give a specific date when Greater Glasgow health board will release details of the Takare contract.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I understand that Greater Glasgow health board will write to the hon. Member this week.

Local Enterprise Companies

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the inaugural business plan of local enterprise companies will be made public by him.

Mr. Lang: As indicated in paragraph 7.2 of the Scottish Enterprise handbook, local enterprise companies themselves will normally be required to publish a summary of their annual business plan.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which components of the Training Agency's budget in Scotland will be allocated to local enterprise companies; and how much is currently spent on each of these schemes.

Mr. Lang: Total planned expenditure in Scotland in 1990-91 on each of the Training Agency budget components which will partly or wholly be delivered by local enterprise companies is shown in the table:

	£
Youth training (including Compacts and Community Industry)	92,089,000
Employment training	112,850,000
Business growth training	5,436,000
Enterprise allowance scheme	14,722,000
Training and education support programmes	5,168,000
Marketing, advertising and publicity	2,157,000
Administrative costs	18,516,000

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what aspects of contracts awarded to local enterprise companies will be open to the public.

Mr. Lang: Decisions on the extent to which it would be appropriate to make public aspects of contracts made between local enterprise companies and the Training Agency, the Scottish Development Agency, the Highlands and Islands Development Board, Scottish Enterprise or Highlands and Islands Enterprise (as the case may be) will be taken in the light of the structure eventually adopted for such contracts. It may be that some material associated with individual contracts will be commercial in confidence.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he proposes to make public about how much money is allocated to each local enterprise company; and for what purposes.

Mr. Lang: Announcements on allocations will be a matter for the relevant funding body (Scottish Development Agency, Highlands and Islands Development Board, Training Agency, Scottish Enterprise or Highlands and Islands Enterprise as the case may be). Local enterprise companies will be required to publish accounts showing the sources and application of their funds.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects specific budget allocations to be made to local enterprise companies.

Mr. Lang: A specific budget allocation to each local enterprise company will be made by the Training Agency and the Scottish Development Agency or the Highlands and Islands Development Board (as the case may be) once that local enterprise company's business plan has been approved and when an operating contract is awarded to the company.

School Meals

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is the average price of a school meal; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is the number and percentage of free school meals provided; and if he will make a statement;

(3) how many and what percentage of children took school meals in 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The information requested, taken from the annual school meal census carried out in January 1989, is as follows:

Information	
(1) Average charge for a fixed price school meal	61p
(2) Number of pupils present on Census day	713,034
(3) Number of pupils taking meals	328,688
(4) (3) as a percentage of (2)	46·1
(5) Number of pupils receiving free meals	105,232
(6) (5) as a percentage of (2)	14·8

The proportion of children taking meals is greater than at the 1988 census.

Responsibility for the provision and content of meals lies with education authorities.

Scottish Enterprise

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which of the recommendations of the Coopers and Lybrand Deloitte report on the organisation of Scottish Enterprise has been accepted; and what changes have been made which were not proposed therein.

Mr. Lang: The report was accepted as a whole as a general basis for further planning. Some fine-tuning has been undertaken; but all developments to date are compatible with the terms of the report.

Registered Child Minders

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many registered child minders there are in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: At 31 March 1989 there were 5,444 registered child minders in Scotland.

Forestry

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many times the Nature Conservancy Council consulted the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds over new forestry proposals in each Nature Conservancy Council region in Scotland in each year since 1987.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am consulting the Nature Conservancy Council and will write to the hon. Member.

Hospital Catering

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the cost of catering provisions per patient per day in each health board in each year since 1979, expressed in cash and constant prices.

Mr. Rifkind: The information is not readily available, but I will write to the hon. Member in due course.

General Practitioners

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is his policy in respect of allocation of funds among general practitioners where eligible applications for reimbursement of computer costs exceed the budgeted figure;

(2) what is his budget for the reimbursement of computer costs for general practitioners in 1990-91; and how many general practitioners are eligible to apply.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 18 May 1990]:* In 1990-91 £3 million has been made available for direct reimbursement of general practice computing costs in Scotland, the balance of expenditure being reimbursed indirectly through fees and allowances; all general practitioners who meet the qualifying criteria are eligible to apply. Should funds become fully committed valid claims which are not paid in 1990-91 may be resubmitted in the next financial year.

School Class Sizes

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide information on the average size of teaching groups for the years S1 to S6 in the secondary school subjects: English, mathematics, science subjects, history, geography, modern studies, home economics, physical education, technical education and modern languages.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 21 May 1990]:* The information for session 1987-88 was published in SED statistical bulletin No. 14/C7/1989, a copy of which is in the Library. Information for session 1989-90 is not yet ready for publication and will be published later in the year.

TRANSPORT

Rural Land Loss

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list by year, and by the counties for Yorkshire and Humberside, the number of acres of rural land that has been lost to road schemes in the last 10 years.

Mr. Atkins: The information requested is not readily available in the Department's records and could not be collected at reasonable cost.

London Underground (Safety)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will call for a report from the chairman of London Regional Transport on the implications for public safety of the death of Mr. Raymond Knight at Aldgate underground station on 23 March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I naturally regret Mr. Knight's death. This will be subject to investigation at a coroner's inquest, and I will take note of any recommendations that Her Majesty's coroner might make.

South African Steel Imports

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list by year for the last 10 years, and by port, the amount in tonnes of steel imported from South Africa.

Mr. McLoughlin: Her Majesty's Customs and Excise figures for imports of iron and steel (excluding iron ore, pig iron, ferro alloys, and waste and scrap) consigned from South Africa for the last 10 years and by port, are given in the table.

Thousand tonnes

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
London (including Tilbury)	0·2	0·3	—	0·2	1·5
Folkestone	—	0·1	—	—	—
Southampton	1·5	0·8	0·5	2·1	2·1
Avonmouth	—	0·1	—	0·4	—
Newport, Gwent	15·9	—	—	—	—
Liverpool	—	—	—	—	0·2
Goole	0·1	—	—	—	0·7
Hull	1·9	1·2	—	0·1	—
River Trent	—	—	—	—	0·7
Immingham	68·8	26·3	98·2	41·1	36·4
Grimsby	—	—	—	—	12·1
Ipswich	—	—	—	0·1	—
Total	88·4	28·8	98·8	43·9	53·9

Thousand tonnes

	1985	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*[1]
London (including Tilbury)	0·4	0·3	0·4	0·3	0·3
Southampton	2·2	2·2	2·0	4·2	6·4
Swansea	—	—	—	—	0·2
Mostyn	—	—	—	—	0·1
Ellesmere Port	—	1·1	—	—	—
Liverpool	0·5	2·7	—	—	—
Grangemouth	—	—	0·1	0·2	—
Leith	—	0·5	—	—	—
Sunderland	—	—	—	0·2	—
Goole	0·8	—	—	—	—
Hull	0·2	0·2	1·3	1·3	0·4
Immingham	63·4	75·7	57·8	18·2	6·8
Grimsby	7·9	—	1·4	—	0·5

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989[1]
Felixstowe	1·1	2·4	2·7	5·3	7·9
Ipswich	—	0·1	—	—	—
Harwich	0·1	—	—	—	—
Total	76·6	85·2	65·7	29·7	22·5

[1] Provisional.

Driver Standards

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what specific financial, efficiency and quality of service targets he has approved for the Driver Standards Agency for the current year and for the longer term.

Mr. Atkins: Details of the Driver Standards Agency's financial, efficiency and quality of service targets for the current financial year are contained in the agency's business plan for 1990-91, copies of which are available in the Library.

The financial targets take the form of unit cost targets for the main activities, including £18·72 per L test and £41·71 per HGV-PSV test. The main service level targets are to reduce the national average waiting time for L tests to eight weeks by 31 March 1991 (12 weeks in the Metropolitan region); and to provide HGV and PSV tests at all centres within four weeks.

In the longer term the agency intends to reduce the average L test waiting time to at least six weeks. New measures of service performance which the agency intends progressively to introduce are set out in annex C to the agency's framework document, copies of which are also in the Library.

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what specific financial, efficiency and quality of service targets he has approved for the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency for the current year and for the longer term.

Mr. Atkins: The major targets set for DVLA are:

(1) Financial—to achieve a 6·1 per cent. efficiency gain in its workload unit cost performance.

(2) Efficiency—to improve its overall productivity by a further 2 per cent.

(3) Quality of service—

(a) —To turn round Driver and Vehicle transactions as follows:

(i) Driver licences—turn round 90 per cent. of those received within six days of receipt.

(ii) Vehicle transactions—turn round 90 per cent. within eight to 10 days of receipt.

Full details of the 1990-91 targets are contained in the DVLA business plan, copies of which are placed in the House of Commons Library. Targets beyond 1991-92 have yet to be set.

Liverpool (Visit)

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the recent official visit to Liverpool of the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, West (Mr. McLoughlin).

Mr. McLoughlin: I visited Liverpool airport on 25 April. Following arrangements made some weeks ago, I also visited the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company on 17 May and toured the company's docks and facilities. I regret that I had to cancel my proposed visit to the Liverpool marine office on 17 May.

Air Shows

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what special regulations are in force relating to flying, especially low flying, in connection with air shows for public entertainment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The statutory responsibility for the safety regulation of United Kingdom civil aviation rests with the Civil Aviation Authority.

I am advised by the authority that the Air Navigation Order 1989, at article 56, requires organisers of exhibitions of flying to obtain the permission of the authority. The order specifies conditions and enables the authority to specify such further conditions as it sees fit. The order covers civil aircraft participating in any displays.

Comparable safety standards covering United Kingdom military, visiting military or foreign military aircraft participating in Ministry of Defence and other air displays are contained in joint service publications.

Railways, London

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what criteria he will use when choosing between the east-west cross rail and the Chelsea-Hackney line for investment.

Mr. Freeman: A decision will be based on all the relevant factors including the relief of congestion provided by the schemes; their economic and financial performance; and how the schemes might be financed and safeguarded.

Air Services

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce changes to the United States-United Kingdom bilateral air services agreement; what implications they will have for fifth freedom rights into other EEC countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: A detailed statement would not be appropriate while our negotiations with the United States Government continue; but we are, of course, seeking an early resolution.

Safety at Sea

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport to how many representative organisations he sent Professor Ivan Brown's report on his study into hours of work, fatigue and safety at sea; and how many have responded with comments.

Mr. McLoughlin: Copies of Professor Brown's report were circulated on 2 February to five representative

organisations: the National Union of Maritime, Aviation and Shipping Transport Officers (NUMAST); the National Union of Seamen (NUS); the General Council of British Shipping (GCBS); the British Motor Ship Owners Association (BMSOA); and the British Offshore Support Vessels Association (BOSVA). All of these organisations have now responded with comments, although one has reserved the right to make further comments at a later stage.

Glasgow Airport

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with the Civil Aviation Authority about the installation of radar equipment at Glasgow airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: None. The installation of radar equipment at Glasgow airport is a matter for the British Airports Authority and the Civil Aviation Authority.

Motorway Traffic

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps have been taken to ensure that the number of service stations to be opened under the Government's strategic plans for motorway services areas in England will be adequate to cover his Department's estimate of the increase in the volume of traffic using the motorways after 1992.

Mr. Atkins: The Department's design specifications for new motorway service areas (MSAs) are geared to catering for estimated traffic in the year 2020. There are at present more MSAs planned for existing and new motorways. These are at various stages: two will open soon (Tamworth on M42 and Thurrock on M25) and another four or five sites are expected to be tendered this year for construction and subsequent operation by 1992.

There are 42 existing MSAs in England. The Department is reviewing the capacity of each of these with operators. Its aim is to expand sites wherever possible to meet demand at least for 15 years ahead. Where adequate expansion proves impracticable, new infill sites will be sought between existing MSAs.

Roads Investment

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next expects to meet the Confederation of British Industry to discuss future capital investment on roads.

Mr. Atkins: I have at present no plans to do so.

ENERGY

Council of Energy Ministers

10. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he expects to attend future meetings of the European Community Council of Energy Ministers for discussions on energy saving and anti-pollution measures.

Mr. Wakeham *[pursuant to his reply, 14 May 1990, c. 590]:* The Council, under the presidency of Mr. Molloy, the Irish Energy Minister, made useful progress.

The Council made significant progress towards establishing a single energy market by adopting a directive on transparency of gas and electricity prices and reaching agreement on a directive on transit on electricity networks. However, in the context of gas transit, support for the monopoly privileges of the main gas transmission companies remains strong in the industry and certain member states; we hope for further progress under the next presidency.

The Commission agreed to give priority over its recent proposal to a more thorough implementation of the existing regulations on notification of investment projects.

In addition, the Council debated a European Commission report on energy and the environment and adopted valuable conclusions on the contribution energy policies should make to protecting the environment. It approved the Thermie programme for demonstrating and disseminating new energy technologies which should contribute significantly to that end. Commissioner Cardoso reported to the Council on the Commission's recent "Energy for a New Century Conference" which is expected to be a source of ideas for developing future energy policy.

EMPLOYMENT

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health

12. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether his Department has commissioned any research into the implementation of the COSHH regulations.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive is committed to an evaluation of the impact of the COSHH regulations. A baseline survey was undertaken before the regulations came into force on 1 October 1989, but it is too early yet to commence work on the post-implementation evaluation.

Strikes

16. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to remove the right of employers to secure an injunction against an unlawful strike.

Mr. Howard: Anyone threatened with unlawful action is entitled to apply to the courts for an injunction to prevent it. To restrict that right in respect of any particular group of bodies would place them above the law and could not possibly be justified.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

17. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many businesses were started under the enterprise allowance scheme in 1989-90.

Mr. Eggar: In 1989-90 almost 78,000 businesses were started under the enterprise allowance scheme.

48. **Mr. Leigh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many businesses have been started under the enterprise allowance scheme since it began.

Mr. Eggar: Over 500,000 unemployed people have been helped to start their own business under the enterprise allowance scheme since it began in 1982.

Health and Safety

18. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals he has to improve health protection and safety conditions in the workplace.

Mr. Nicholls: Responsibility for ensuring satisfactory health and safety standards rests with employers and others concerned at the workplace. The Government have increased financial provision for the Health and Safety Commission and Executive over previously agreed levels again in 1990-91.

The commission's priorities for improving health and safety at work will be set out in its plan of work for 1990-91 and beyond, to be published shortly.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals he has to extend health and safety protection in the workplace.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Commission is responsible for bringing forward proposals for the reform and extension as necessary of health and safety legislation. Details of the Commission's future legislative programme will be contained in its plan of work for 1990-91 and beyond, which it hopes to publish shortly.

Union Ballots

19. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has received any representations about the balloting provisions of the Trade Union Act 1984.

Mr. Howard: My Department continues to receive representation on various aspects of industrial relations law including matters relating to the balloting provisions of the Trade Union Act 1984.

35. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many representations he has received from members of trade unions in the last month urging repeal of the balloting provisions of the Trade Union Act 1984.

Mr. Nicholls: No such representations have been received.

Part-time Workers

20. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to extend the protection of part-time workers.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. and learned Friend has no such plans.

Labour Statistics

21. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total work force in employment in *(a)* May 1979, *(b)* June 1987 and *(c)* the latest month for which figures are available.

Mr. Howard: The work force in employment stood at 25·4 million in June 1979, 25·1 million in June 1987, and 27·1 million in December 1989, its highest level ever.

22. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the level of unemployment in the north-west region in April 1986 and April 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: In April 1990, the level of unemployment, seasonally adjusted, in the north-west region was 231,500, compared with 425,200 in April 1986, a fall of 45·6 per cent.

75. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of the population in the metropolitan borough of Rotherham is in full-time employment; and what is the national average.

Mr. Nicholls: Consistent information at local level on employment and population by place of residence is available only from the census of population.

In the census of population returns for April 1981, 44·7 per cent. of people aged 16 and over and living in the metropolitan borough of Rotherham said that they had worked full-time in the preceding week. The comparable figure for Great Britain was 45·6 per cent.

70. **Mr. Andrew MacKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the current level of unemployment.

Mr. Nicholls: In April 1990, seasonally adjusted unemployment in the United Kingdom was 1,605,600.

60. **Mr. Knowles:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the total increase in the number of jobs in Great Britain since 1979.

Mr. Nicholls: In December 1989, the latest date for which information is available, the work force in employment was 26,487,000, the highest level ever. This represents an increase of 1,720,000, or 7 per cent. since June 1979.

54. **Mr. Maples:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total level of unemployment in the 57 urban programme areas in *(a)* March 1988 and *(b)* March 1990.

Mr. Nicholls: In the 57 local authority areas in England within which the Government target inner-city programme aid, the number of unemployed claimants in March 1988 was 982,379, compared with 643,981 in March 1990. Direct comparisons over time are affected by various changes to the count, in particular the change in benefit regulations for under 18-year-olds in September 1988, and by seasonal influences. Certain areas may also be affected by changes to the redundant mineworkers payments scheme.

51. **Mr. Burt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment by what percentage the level of unemployment fell in Bury, North between September 1986 and April 1990.

Mr. Nicholls: Between September 1986 and April 1990 the number of unemployed claimants in Bury, North parliamentary constituency fell by 61 per cent. Direct comparisons are affected by the change in benefit regulations for under 18-year-olds in September 1988, and by seasonal influences.

49. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average monthly fall in unemployment over the period *(a)* March 1974 to May 1979 and *(b)* July 1986 to March 1990.

Mr. Nicholls: Between March 1974 and May 1979 there was an average monthly rise in unemployment, seasonally

adjusted, of 9,484. Between July 1986 to March 1990 the average monthly fall in seasonally adjusted unemployment was 34,761.

37. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total number of unfilled vacancies held by job centres in the north-west of England during the last full month for which figures are available.

Mr. Nicholls: In April 1990 the number of unfilled vacancies, seasonally adjusted, at job centres in the north-west region was 23,200.

27. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current level of unemployment in the United Kingdom; and what it was in 1979 on the most nearly comparable basis.

Mr. Nicholls: The seasonally adjusted series of unemployment provides figures that are comparable over the time period requested. In April 1990, the seasonally adjusted level of claimant unemployment in the United Kingdom was 1,605,600, compared with 1,089,100 in April 1979.

Economic League

23. **Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he last met representatives of the Economic League to discuss the protection of employees' privacy.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has had no meetings with representatives of the Economic League.

Minimum Wage Protection

24. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on enforcement of minimum wage protection.

Mr. Nicholls: The level of compliance with wages orders is very high. My right hon. and learned Friend is satisfied that the present policy of targeting the resources of the wages inspectorate towards those employers most likely to underpay is the most effective way of enforcing minimum wage legislation.

Single European Market

25. **Mr. Aitken:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he next expects to meet his European Community counterparts to discuss the implications of 1992.

Mr. Eggar: I shall be meeting my European Community counterparts at an informal meeting of Labour and Social Affairs Ministers on 28 May and at a full Council meeting the following day to discuss a number of current employment and social issues.

Training

26. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how he will improve health and safety conditions on Government training schemes.

Mr. Nicholls: It will be for the training and enterprise councils, and the local enterprise councils in Scotland, to carry forward sound and effective policies on health and safety in conjunction with their training providers. Each TEC must have a detailed planning statement on health and safety incorporated into its contract and will have to comply fully with its terms.

Under this statement each TEC must have a systematic and effective monitoring strategy, and it will have to ensure that its staff are well trained to carry out their health and safety obligations.

EC Social Action Programme

28. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make a statement on the Government's approach to the European Commission's social action programme.

Mr. Eggar: We intend to take a full part in the negotiations on the individual proposals in the social action programme. We will measure each proposal against two key criteria: first, its effect on jobs and unemployment; and secondly, whether it accords with the principle of subsidiarity, which means that action should not be proposed at Community level in areas best left to member states to deal with in accordance with their tradition and practice.

Technical and Vocational Education Initiative

29. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much his Department plans to spend on the technical and vocational education initiative in the current financial year.

Mr. Eggar: As laid out in the public expenditure White Paper the Department plans to spend £134 million on the technical and vocational education initiative in 1990-91.

Employment Training

30. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether any extra staff have been employed by the Health and Safety Executive to monitor health and safety on employment training schemes.

Mr. Nicholls: No. By virtue of the Health and Safety (Training for Employment) Regulations 1988, participants on employment training and similar training schemes at employers' premises are covered by the full range of statutory health, safety and welfare provisions which apply to employed people. Accordingly, when Health and Safety Executive inspectors are examining conditions at workplaces, they do not differentiate between trainees and employees.

66. **Mr. Quentin Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will list the local authorities which have refused to participate in the employment training programme.

Mr. Nicholls: This information is not available.

Training and Enterprise Councils

31. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how his Department will monitor the effectiveness of training enterprise councils.

Mr. Eggar: Training and enterprise councils (TECs) will set out in their corporate and business plans detailed

proposals for training and enterprise to meet local needs. These plans will form part of a TEC's contract with my Department. They will set out key targets and progress towards these targets will be monitored on a regular basis.

62. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many training and enterprise councils have received development funding.

Mr. Eggar: Seventy-two training and enterprise councils (TECs) have been awarded development funding to date. Of these, 13 TECs have now been approved to become operational.

46. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the progress of TECs in the north-west.

Mr. Eggar: Five training and enterprise councils (TECs) in the north-west have been approved to become operational, covering Cumbria, south and east Cheshire, Oldham, Rochdale and east Lancashire.

A number of other prospective TECs in the north-west are currently preparing their corporate and business plans and I expect them to become operational in due course.

38. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the first 10 training and enterprise councils to become operational.

Mr. Eggar: Contracts for the first 10 training and enterprise councils (TECs) to become operational were signed on 3 April. These covered:

Hertfordshire
Thames Valley
Devon/Cornwall
Dorset
Calderdale and Kirklees
Cumbria
South and East Cheshire
Teesside
Tyneside
Wearside

In addition a further three TECs have since been approved to go operational. These cover Oldham, Rochdale and east Lancashire.

Disabled People

32. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what new measures he proposes to take to increase employment of disabled people by organisations in both the private and public sectors.

Mr. Eggar: Measures to promote the employment of people with disabilities are among the matters being considered in the review of services for people with disabilities which my Department has been undertaking. We expect to publish next month the consultative document giving the results of the review.

72. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people with disabilities are assisted annually by his Department.

Mr. Eggar: In 1988-89, the latest year for which figures are available, approximately 220,000 people with disabilities were assisted by this Department's employment and training programmes.

43. **Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals he has to enable people with disabilities to participate more fully in the workplace.

65. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what additional measures he will introduce to enable people with disabilities to participate more fully in the work force.

Mr. Eggar: My Department already maintains a comprehensive network of services to help people with disabilities find and retain jobs. The adequacy of current measures to enable people with disabilities to participate fully in the work force is being considered in the review of services for people with disabilities which my Department has been undertaking. We expect to publish next month the consultative document giving the results of the review.

Tourism

33. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the implementation of his tourism review.

Mr. Nicholls: Progress continues to be made to implement the results of the review announced by my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler), *Official Report*, 28 November 1989, column *212*. Ministers and officials are regularly reviewing progress on all the recommendations with the British Tourist Authority and the English tourist board.

63. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what figures he has for the total number of overseas visitors to the United Kingdom during the first quarter of 1990; and what was the figure for the first quarter of 1989.

Mr. Nicholls: It is estimated that overseas residents made 2,310,000 visits to the United Kingdom during the first two months of 1990, the latest period for which results are available. This is 15 per cent. higher than in the equivalent period of 1989.

55. **Mr. McCrindle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has received any representations for soft loans from the tourist industry.

Mr. Nicholls: It has been suggested to my Department that the tourism industry could benefit from the provision of soft loans towards meeting the cost of capital developments. However, the English tourist board's latest reported record levels of investment in tourism projects show that there is no shortage of investors willing to support good quality and commercially sound tourism projects.

50. **Mr. Charles Wardle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the increase in the current financial year in his Department's grant to the English tourist board.

Mr. Nicholls: In 1990-91 the English tourist board will receive grant in aid of £14,595,000. This represents a 9 per cent. increase over the £13,265,000 grant in aid for 1989-90.

41. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many tourists visited Britain in the last year.

Mr. Nicholls: The information is published in table 8.2 of the May issue of *Employment Gazette*.

Employment Medical Advisory Service

34. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many doctors were employed in the employment medical advisory service on the latest available date.

Mr. Nicholls: On 1 April 1990, there were 46 doctors in post in the Health and Safety Executive's employment medical advisory service.

Child Care

36. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to encourage the provision of child care facilities in the workplace.

Mr. Nicholls: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay) on 5 December 1989, *Official Report*, column *196*.

Gateshead Garden Festival

39. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the impact of the Gateshead national garden festival on tourism in the north-east; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: Experience of previous festivals shows that the Gateshead garden festival will result in a significant increase in the number of visitors to the region.

Youth Training

40. **Mr. Viggers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on progress in current youth training schemes.

Mr. Nicholls: There are currently 359,500 young people on YTS which is being delivered by some 3,280 managing agents. The latest YTS leavers' survey shows that 86 per cent. of young people who completed their training went into employment and 67 per cent. gained a qualification. Youth training, which will be introduced on 29 May, will build on the successes of YTS. It will enable a more flexible approach to be adopted towards the training of young people, will produce higher levels of skills, and will focus on the needs and interests of the local community. Youth training will be introduced nationally on 29 May. Those training and enterprise councils that are already operational have the opportunity, if they wish, of implementing the new training arrangements before that date.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list by year and by regional training area since the inception of the YTS, the percentage of trainees having literacy problems.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not available.

Litter Charter

42. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps his Department is taking to promote the codes of practice contained in the environmental litter charter among organisations and businesses involved in tourism.

Mr. Nicholls: Through the English tourist board and the regional tourist boards, my Department supports a number of anti-litter initiatives. The litter charter, which was launched by my noble Friend Lord Strathclyde, is a joint London tourism forum initiative, but I am sure that other regions will wish to consider adopting a similar approach.

Health and Safety Commission

44. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he last met the chairman of the Health and Safety Commission; and what subjects were discussed.

68. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he last met the chairman of the Health and Safety Commission; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Nicholls: I refer the hon. Members to the reply my right hon. and learned Friend gave to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) on 15 February, *Official Report* column *217*.

Small Firms

45. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps his Department is taking to assist small firms to secure Government procurement and other public sector contracts.

Mr. Eggar: My Department gives a high priority to encouraging the participation of small firms in tendering for public sector contracts and in making it easier for them to do so.

We have published and widely distributed to Government purchasers a booklet "Think Big, Buy Small" on how to assist small firms in tendering for Government contracts. This has been well received by all Government Departments. My Department is also supporting a purchasing specialist in the Treasury's Central Unit on Purchasing to look at ways of helping Government Departments to improve their purchasing procedures and to provide greater access by small firms to Government business. We have recently updated "Tendering for Government Contracts", a booklet giving contact points and general information on what Departments buy, their procedures and any special opportunities they offer small firms. I am pleased to say all the major spending Departments now successfully produce their own guidance to potential suppliers, and provide feedback to potential suppliers on their bids wherever possible.

I intend that my Department should be used as a test bed for good purchasing practices and later this year I hope to meet the heads of Government purchasing departments to update them on the results of this work and to encourage them to explore further the benefits to Government of using small suppliers.

47. **Mr. Watts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many small firms received counselling from the small firms service in 1988-89.

Mr. Eggar: In 1988-89 the small firms service in England provided 43,029 counselling sessions to 30,634 clients.

Footwear Industry

52. **Mr. Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a further statement on job losses in the footwear industry.

Mr. Nicholls: The number of employees in employment in the footwear industry fell by 4,000 (8 per cent.) between March 1989 and March 1990.

Industrial Relations

53. **Mr. David Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to create a special tribunal to assume jurisdiction over cases arising from industrial relations legislation.

Mr. Nicholls: No. Industrial tribunals already exist to hear a range of compaints under employment protection legislation. I have no plans to create a new tribunal.

58. **Mr. Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has received any further representations from the Confederation of British Industry requesting further changes in industrial relations law; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: From time to time my Department receives representations from a number of organisations, including the Confederation of British Industry, on various aspects of industrial relations law. We continue to keep this legislation under review.

Modern Languages

56. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what he is doing to improve skills in modern languages among the work force.

Mr. Eggar: In schools and colleges the technical and vocational education initiative is building on the foundations of the national curriculum by encouraging the learning of modern languages.

Both youth training and employment training offer opportunities—where vocationally relevant—for people to learn languages, and an employer-led body has recently been established to develop qualifications which measure practical competence in languages among people at work.

Factory Inspectors

57. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many factory inspectors were in post on the latest available date.

Mr. Nicholls: On 1 April 1990, 634·5 factory inspectors were in post in the Health and Safety Executive.

Clothing Industry

59. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many inspections were undertaken last year by the clothing industry wages council.

Mr. Nicholls: Checking compliance with wages council minimum rates is the responsibility of the wages inspectorate, not the wages council itself.

For the information requested, I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) on 14 March, *Official Report*, columns *252-56*.

Social Charter

61. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has received about the progress made in Brussels in formulating the various directives arising out of the social charter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I understand that the Commission is well advanced with drafting a number of the directives in the social action programme; and that the first of these—on "atypical" work, for example, part-time and temporary work; and on the adaptation of working time—are expected to be published in June.

Wages Council Inspectors

64. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to increase the number of wages councils inspectors.

Mr. Nicholls: None.

Construction Industry Training Board

67. **Mr. Latham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he will make a statement on the reconstitution of the construction industry training board.

Mr. Nicholls: The construction industry training board was reconstituted on 1 May 1990 as an employer-led body.

Training Levy

69. **Mr. Janman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to introduce a training levy of 0·5 per cent. of payroll on business.

Mr. Nicholls: No. The most effective incentive for employers to train is a knowledge and understanding of their skill needs, not centralised regulation based on statutory powers.

Employment Rights

71. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how he intends to extend employment rights to all those in work.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. and learned Friend has no current plans to extend the employment protection legislation.

Self-employed Women

73. **Mrs. Roe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment by how much the number of women who are self-employed has changed since 1979.

Mr. Nicholls: The estimated number of self-employed women in the United Kingdom rose from 357,000 in June 1979 to 782,000 in December 1989, an increase of 426,000 (119 per cent.).

Low Pay

74. **Ms. Ruddock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many firms visited in 1989 were paying below the legal wages council minima; and how many were prosecuted.

Mr. Nicholls: The wages inspectorate compiles its statistics on the basis of establishments rather than firms. In 1989, 5,528 of the establishments visited were found to be paying less than the statutory minimum due to at least one of their workers.

There were nine prosecutions for underpayment offences.

Radiation

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many unannounced visits relating to radiation exposure monitoring were made by the factory inspectorate to Ministry of Defence and privatised establishments since 1970, by establishment.

Mr. Nicholls: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide information on the number of personnel employed by his Department, including the Health and Safety Executive, on the inspection, maintenance and improvement of standards of radiation monitoring, by United Kingdom region, for *(a)* Ministry of Defence workers' exposure and *(b)* civilian workers' exposure.

Mr. Nicholls: Information on funding is confidential to my Department and individual employment training (ET) training managers.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many visits relating to radiation exposure monitoring were made by the factory inspectorate to Ministry of Defence and privatised establishments since 1970, by establishment.

Mr. Nicholls: The information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Wages

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report* average wage rates since 1979 *(a)* in Wales and *(b)* in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Nicholls: Information on average wage rates is not available, but data of the average gross weekly earnings of full-time adult employees are set out in the table.

Average gross weekly Earnings of all full-time adult employees Pay not affected by absence; April of each year

Year	*Wales*	*£ per week United Kingdom*
1979	87·6	89·4
1980	106·4	110·0
1981	119·4	124·6
[1]1982	130·2	136·3
[2]1983	140·0	147·9
1983	139·4	147·1
1984	149·2	159·0
1985	160·3	170·6
1986	170·3	184·2
1987	183·4	198·4
1988	196·5	217·7
1989	215·9	238·9

[1]From 1979 to 1983, males aged 21 and over and females aged 18 and over.
[2]From 1983 onwards, all on adult rates irrespective of age.
Source: New Earnings Surveys.

Share Community

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what recent discussions his Department has had with Share Community about its level of activity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: My Department is currently in negotiations with Share Community to establish a new employment training (ET) contract. Our aim is to conclude negotiations as soon as possible.

Loan Guarantee Scheme

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the total cost to the Exchequer of the loan guarantee scheme to 31 March; what has been the cost per loan guaranteed; and what assumptions have been made about additionality, displacement and failures in computing the net Exchequer cost of the scheme for persons leaving the unemployment count given to the honourable Member for Surrey, North-West (Mr. Grylls) on 3 May, *Official Report*, column *639*.

Mr. Eggar: The total net cost to the Exchequer of the loan guarantee scheme to 31 March 1990 was £122 million, and the cost per loan guaranteed was £4,920.

To calculate the net Exchequer cost of the scheme per person leaving the unemployment count, it was assumed from evaluation evidence that additionality is about one third, displacement about two thirds and that slightly less than 30 per cent. of firms taking out a guarantee will fail within the first three years. These assumptions are conservative estimates based on the available information from recent surveys.

New Jobs

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many new jobs have been created in each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: Separate figures of job gains and job losses are not available. Net increases in the work force in employment over the previous five years were as follows:

Work force in employment—United Kingdom seasonally adjusted—thousands

Year ending December	*Change*	*Percentage change*
1985	125	0·5
1986	153	0·6
1987	833	3·4
1988	785	3·1
1989	728	2·8

Nuclear Installations Inspectorate

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the increase in the establishment of the nuclear installations inspectorate over any convenient period in the last three years.

Mr. Nicholls: On 1 April 1987, 168·5 staff—103 of them inspectors—were in post in the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate. By 1 April this year, staff in post had increased to 249·5, of whom 162 were inspectors.

Deaf People (Employment)

Sir Alan Glyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the regulations regarding the employment by sub-contractors of deaf people in locations such as weirs.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 18 May 1990]:* Under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 employers,

including sub-contractors, have a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety at work of all their employees. Employers should take into account any special hazards that arise from the known state of health of the worker and the circumstances of the job. There are no health and safety regulations which specifically relate to the employment of deaf people generally or by sub-contractors.

Sheltered Training

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the total level of Government funding to sheltered training groups over the past financial year; what is the projected budget for the current financial year; and how many places this has created in each year.

Mr. Sillars: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the total level of Government funding to sheltered training groups over the past financial year; what is the projected budget for the current financial year; and how many places this has created in each year.

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the total level of Government funding to sheltered training groups over the past financial year; what is the projected budget for the current financial year; and how many places this has created in each year.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the total level of Government funding to sheltered training groups over the past financial year; what is the projected budget for the current financial year; and how many places this has created in each year.

Mr. Eggar: It is estimated that £88 million was spent on the sheltered employment programme last year and that £98 million will be available this year, excluding capital grants. The number of places supported in 1989-90 increased by 1,487 over the year. I do not expect there to be any significant increase in the number of places in the current year.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 23 May 1990

PRIME MINISTER

Renault (Subsidies)

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the refusal of the French Government to obey the instruction of the European Economic Community Commission on the reclaiming of substantial sums provided to messrs Renault; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding reply 22 May 1990]:* I understand that the Commission made a decision on this case yesterday. I do not know what the considered response of the French Government will be. We will continue to watch the case closely.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Fire Risks

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether his Department has made any assessment of the fire risk among the homeless people living in cardboard boxes.

120. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether his Department has conducted any studies on the risk of fire to people living in cardboard boxes.

121. **Mrs. Golding:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to deal with the fire risk in cardboard cities.

Mr. John Patten: Assessment of all fire risks is a matter for the professional judgment of chief fire officers. Their contingency plans take into account the risk presented by makeshift habitations and operational arrangements are adjusted to meet any new circumstances.

Public Appointments

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the full time and part time public appointments for which he is responsible, together with the salary and the date when the appointment is due for renewal.

Mr. Waddington: The available information is published by the Cabinet Office in "Public Bodies 1989", a copy of which is in the Library. The dates when these appointments are due for renewal are subject to change, and are not held centrally.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how may staff are employed by his Department; and what proportion of them are employed in each of the standard regions.

Mr. Waddington: The table below sets out Home Office staff by region as at 18 May 1990:

	Numbers	*Per cent*
London region	11,125	26·6
Rest of South-East	7,684	18·3
South-West	2,981	7·1
East Anglia	1,980	4·7
East Midlands	3,086	7·4
West Midlands	3,116	7·4
North-West	4,936	11·8
Yorkshire/Humberside	3,528	8·4
North	2,202	5·3
Wales	943	2·3
Northern Ireland	48	0·1
Scotland	239	0·6
Total	41,868	100

Note: Part-time staff have been counted as whole units.

Charity Commission

Mr. Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether any changes will be made to the Charity Commission cash limit and running cost limit for 1990-91.

Mr. John Patten: Subject to parliamentary approval of the revised estimate, the cash limit for the Charity Commission's vote (class IX, vote 5) has been reduced by £4 million from £18,302,000 to £14,302,000. This is the result of a new office building being acquired by lease rather than by freehold purchase, as originally proposed. The Commission's running costs limit has been increased by £10,000 from £13,404,000 to £13,414,000. The increase represents part of the cost of a management consultant appointed to co-ordinate a comprehensive programme of change within the Commission. The full cost will be recouped by a contribution from the private sector and by other offsetting savings.

IBA Transmissions System

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how the payment of preliminary expenses in respect of the sale of the Independent Broadcasting Authority transmissions system is being financed.

Mr. Mellor: Parliamentary approval for this service has been sought in the supply estimates for 1990-91. Pending that approval urgent and necessary expenditure estimated at £281,000 will be met by a repayable advance from the contingencies fund.

Private Security Firms

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to introduce statutory minimum training standards for employees of private security firms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. and learned Friend has no such plans at present. As part of the Training Agency standards programme, representatives from the security industry and users of security industry services are working together to develop training standards and related national vocational qualifications. In addition, the British Standards Institute is developing a British standard

code of practice for the operation and management of manned security services, which will include and specify requirements for the training of staff.

Pornography

Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the review of the academic research into the links between pornography and sexual crime, announced in January, has been completed; and when he expects that the review will be published.

Mr. Mellor: Good progress is being made. We hope the report will be published in the autumn.

Young Offenders (Sentencing)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list by year for the last 10 years and by *(a)* sex and *(b)* ethnic group the number of children committed under section 53; and if he will make a statement.

(2) if he will list by year for the last 12 months for which he has figures and by *(a)* sex and *(b)* ethnic origin, the offences committed by children detained under section 53.

Mr. John Patten: The number of defendants ordered to be detained under section 53 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 is given in table A below for the years 1979 to 1988. Data are not available by ethnic origin for orders made by the court. However, for recent years ethnic origin is recorded for receptions to prison service establishments. An analysis for receptions of offenders detained under section 53 is given in table B. To produce such tables for earlier years would involve disproportionate cost.

Table A

Defendants ordered to be detained under section 53 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933
England and Wales

Year	Males	Females
1979	75	4
1980	80	5
1981	82	6
1982	112	2
1983	84	1
1984	116	5
1985	164	8
1986	166	6
1987	169	4
1988	188	11

Table B

Receptions[1] into prison service establishments in England and Wales of offenders detained under section 53 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933: by sex, offence and ethnic origin, 1988

Offence Group	White		West Indian, Guyanese		Ethnic origin Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi		Chinese, Arab, Mixed origin		Other not recorded (inc. refusals)		All persons received into Prison Service establishments	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Violence against the person	37	2	9	—	2	—	2	—	—	—	50	2
Sexual offences	11	—	2	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	14	—
Burglary	29	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	31	—
Robbery	34	6	13	—	3	—	2	—	2	—	54	6
Criminal damage	3	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	—
Drug offence	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
Other offences	23	1	—	—	1	—	2	—	—	—	26	1
Offence not recorded	4	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	6	—
Total	142	9	28	—	9	—	6	—	2	—	187	9

[1] Including detainees transferred from non-Prison Service establishments.

Prisoners (Deaths)

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state the ethnic origin of those prisoners who died at prison service establishments between 1 January 1989 and 31 March 1990.

Mr. Mellor: Between 1 January 1989 and 31 March 1990, 103 inmates died at prison service establishments. Their ethnic origin was as follows:

	Numbers
White	89
West Indian	7
Indian	3
Pakistani	2
African	2

Metropolitan Police Forensic Science Laboratory

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many scientific staff are employed at the Metropolitan police forensic science laboratory; and how many were employed at the laboratory in each of the preceding three years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is shown in the table:

	Scientific staff employed
30 April 1987	206
30 April 1988	203
30 April 1989	207
30 April 1990	215

Orange Badges

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding outlawing display and use of the orange badge by anyone other than the holder of the badge.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State met a delegation from the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee, led by the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley), on 24 April to discuss this subject. We are considering carefully the representations which were made at the meeting.

Police Stations (Prisoners)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for the counties of Yorkshire and Humberside for the latest date for which he has figures *(a)* the police stations that are holding inmates from prisons because of a shortage of detention space, *(b)* the number they are holding and *(c)* from which prison they were transferred.

Mr. Mellor: On Friday 18 May 1990 there were 155 prisoners held in police stations in Yorkshire. No prisoners were held in Humberside police stations. Not all of these currently held in police stations were at Her Majesty's prison Manchester at the time of the disturbance, but they would have been accommodated in Manchester prison but for the loss of accommodation there.

Details of the number of prisoners held in each police station in Yorkshire are as follows:

Police Station	*Number of Prisoners*
Holmfirth	6
Morley	7
Halifax	13
Weetwood	5
South Kirby	8
Huddersfield	13
Dewsbury	10
Sheffield	29
Doncaster	23
Barnsley	14
Rotherham	16
York	11

Electronic Tagging

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of electronically tagged offenders have breached the conditions of their sentence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: The electronic monitoring trials involved defendants on bail and not sentenced offenders. As at 16 May the number of defendants who have breached their conditions of bail was as follows:

Total Monitored	*Breaches*
50	28

Electronic monitoring of itself cannot prevent breaches of bail, which are also committed by defendants on bail subject to other conditions, but it does enable even minor breaches to be swiftly detected and recorded.

Police (Firearms)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by individual police force in the United Kingdom, how many officers are authorised to carry firearms on routine patrols while *(a)* on foot, *(b)* in a patrol vehicle, *(c)* horse mounted, *(d)* in the air and *(e)* on other patrol.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Details of the number of authorised firearms police officers in England and Wales on 31 December 1989—the latest date for which information is readily available—is contained in the table.

Numbers of authorised firearms officers by force area as at 31 December 1989

	Number
Avon and Somerset	110
Bedfordshire	37
Cambridgeshire	45
Cheshire	95
Cleveland	66
City of London	101
Cumbria	125
Derbyshire	98
Devon and Cornwall	141
Dorset	68
Durham	84
Essex	155
Gloucestershire	66
Greater Manchester	194
Hampshire	126
Hertfordshire	91
Humberside	92
Kent	193
Lancashire	191
Leicestershire	100
Lincolnshire	86
Merseyside	135
Metropolitan	2,552
Norfolk	110
Northamptonshire	70
Northumbria	159
North Yorkshire	183
Nottinghamshire	126
South Yorkshire	153
Staffordshire	55
Suffolk	100
Surrey	65
Sussex	198
Thames Valley	264
Warwickshire	55
West Mercia	103
West Midlands	140
West Yorkshire	185
Wiltshire	96
Dyfed Powys	46
Gwent	40
North Wales	67
South Wales	145
Total England and Wales	7,311

The issue of a firearm to an authorised firearms officer requires the further authority of a senior officer. This is given only where there is reason to suppose that the officer may have to face a person who is armed or otherwise so dangerous that he could not safely be restrained without the use of firearms; or for the destruction of dangerous animals.

Shop Opening Hours

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans the Government have to introduce legislation to remove restrictions on small shopkeepers' opening hours; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: So long as opinions differ widely on the subject of Sunday trading, the Government have no plans for early legislation to reform the Shops Act 1950.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Provision of Services

Mr. Page: To ask the hon. Member for Berwick upon Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what steps the Commission is taking to improve the machinery for the provision of services to hon. Members and the House.

Mr. Beith: The House of Commons Commission has decided to set up a review to examine whether the responsibilities for the management of the House and its facilities, at present divided between itself, the Select Committee on House of Commons (Services), the Department of the Environment and the Leader of the House, can be brought together with a view to ensuring that so far as possible there is a co-ordinated management and decision-taking structure under the control of the House, which can adequately respond to Members' needs and demands for services, and determine priorities between them.

Sir Robin Ibbs KBE has been invited to undertake this work and in due course to advise the Commission of his recommendations for change. Members either individually or collectively through the various House Committees and other representative bodies will be consulted during the course of Sir Robin's study, and will be able to make individual representations to him.

The House will be advised of the outcome of this review, and of any organisational proposals arising therefrom, after Sir Robin Ibbs has tendered his advice to the Commission.

Food

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many free-range eggs are consumed in the House each week on average; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: An average of 10,000 eggs, all of which are free range, are consumed in the House each week.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many representations he has received from hon. and right hon. Members in the past 12 months concerning the availability of vegetarian and vegan food in the House; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Refreshment Department has received no requests from Members in respect of the availability of vegetarian and vegan food. Vegetarian dishes are, however, provided on the menus of all outlets in the House; and it is understood that the Refreshment Department responds sympathetically to specific requests for other specialised menus.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Legal Services

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has yet made a decision on whether to create authorised practitioners and licensed conveyancers in Northern Ireland along the lines laid down in the Administration of Justice Act and the Courts and Legal Services Bill in England and Wales; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: We are considering the future framework for legal services in Northern Ireland, including the provision of conveyancing, in consultation with my noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor. I expect that a policy paper for Northern Ireland will be published in the autumn.

School Meals

Mr. Gregory: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what is the number and percentage of free school meals provided; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many and what percentage of children took school meals in 1989; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what is the average price of a school meal; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 22 May 1990]:* At the annual census on a day in October 1989, 155,769 pupils took school meals, 47 per cent. of those present. Of the meals taken 74,416, 48 per cent., were free. The average charge for a fixed-priced school meal is 80p.

Stevens Inquiry

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on what date his Department received the report of the Stevens inquiry.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 21 May 1990]:* The Chief Constable of the RUC made a copy of the report available to officials in my Department on 11 April 1990.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Population

Sir Charles Morrison: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contributions, for each of the years 1988, 1989 and 1990 have been made to the International Planned Parenthood Federation, the United Nations Population Fund and the World Health Organisation's special programme on human reproduction.

Mrs. Chalker: The following contributions have been made:

£'000

	1988	*1989*	*1990*[1]
IPPF	6,000	6,897	7,399
UNFPA	5,250	5,500	6,000
WHO/HRP	2,200	2,200	2,300
Total	13,450	14,597	15,699

[1] Pledged contribution.

Sir Charles Morrison: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the total expenditure on population activities for each of the years 1989 and 1990; and what percentage this represents of total gross public expenditure on aid for each of the years 1989 and 1990.

Mrs. Chalker: In 1989, £17·275 million was spent on population activities: this figure represents 1 per cent. of total gross public expenditure on aid. Figures for 1990 are not yet available. In addition, aid spending on other programmes, including health care and education, especially that benefiting women, helps create the conditions for slowing down the rapid rate of population growth.

Philippines

Sir Philip Goodhart: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what financial support has been offered to the Government of the Philippines to build a camp for refugees from Vietnam.

Mrs. Chalker: We have committed £3 million from the overseas aid programme, within the context of the comprehensive plan of action for dealing with Vietnamese refugees, towards the costs of extending an existing camp at Bataan in the Philippines. This facility, which is being supervised by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, is intended to be used as a processing centre for Vietnamese from Hong Kong who are classified as refugees and are en route to resettlement in other countries. Other donors are also expected to contribute towards its costs.

Overseas Development Administration

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what changes have been made in the cash limit for expenditure by the Overseas Development Administration in 1990-91.

Mrs. Chalker: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit on the overseas aid vote (class II, vote 5) will be increased by £30,000,000 from £1,441,654,000 to £1,471,654,000. As I announced on 5 April at column 734, the increase enables provision to be taken for a pledge in support of Zambia's economic reform programme and for an increase in the external financing limit of the Commonwealth Development Corporation. The increase will be charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Public Appointments

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the full and part time public appointments for which he is responsible, together with the salary and the date when each appointment is due for renewal.

Mrs. Rumbold: This information has been provided by the Department to the Women's National Commission for its directory "Women in Public Appointments". The directory is to be published next month and a copy will then be placed in the Library.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many staff are employed by his Department; and what proportion of them are employed in each of the standard regions.

Mrs. Rumbold: This information is available in "Civil Service Statistics 1988-89, table 3" a copy of which is in the Library.

Literacy

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has, by year for the last 10 years and by local education authority, on the percentage of pupils leaving school who have literacy problems.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The Department does not collect statistics on pupils leaving school with literacy problems. The attached tables show, for all LEAs in the regions and the larger LEAs individually, for three years, the percentage of pupils leaving school without a graded result in English.

Maintained schools in England
Percentage of school leavers with no graded result in English

LEAs	*1977-78*	*1982-83*	*1987-88*
Avon	16·3	11·9	13·2
Bedfordshire	22·2	18·2	15·0
Berkshire	17·7	10·5	10·7
Birmingham	28·6	23·0	20·5
Bolton	29·1	25·4	14·7
Bradford	32·1	23·3	28·5
Buckinghamshire	15·1	8·3	10·4
Cambridgeshire	22·9	17·2	10·3
Cheshire	22·8	18·7	13·7
Cleveland	18·5	15·2	19·4
Cornwall[1]	22·8	13·0	14·9
Coventry	20·8	18·0	16·1
Cumbria	17·3	15·7	13·5
Derbyshire	23·3	16·1	14·7
Devon	21·7	12·2	11·3
Doncaster	24·2	21·2	21·0
Dorset	18·1	10·7	9·8
Dudley	25·7	13·6	12·1
Durham	20·4	19·0	17·6
East Sussex	20·3	17·2	11·8
Essex	19·6	15·0	13·5
Gloucestershire	20·3	11·6	11·3
Hampshire	20·7	12·1	12·4
Hereford and Worcester	21·5	13·5	12·7
Hertfordshire	15·5	14·4	14·6
Humberside	23·5	20·3	14·5
Inner London	31·6	27·3	28·0
Kent	22·1	12·8	15·6
Kirklees	23·2	15·9	21·0
Lancashire	23·3	19·8	18·3
Leeds	24·2	17·7	20·1
Leicestershire	25·5	18·6	18·1
Lincolnshire	18·5	11·7	13·8
Liverpool	27·9	26·8	34·2
Manchester	28·2	32·1	39·1
Norfolk	27·4	22·1	19·1
North Yorkshire	18·0	14·0	14·9
Northamptonshire	23·6	13·0	17·1
Northumberland	15·6	8·1	12·7
Nottinghamshire	28·1	14·3	13·0
Oxfordshire	19·3	9·6	11·8
Rotherham	23·8	18·6	17·1
Sandwell	35·1	23·4	21·5
Sefton	18·9	17·3	19·6
Sheffield	13·8	17·1	17·0
Shropshire	25·2	13·6	14·7
Somerset	24·8	13·6	8·9
Staffordshire	32·8	18·0	15·9
Stockport	22·8	15·6	15·6
Suffolk	28·6	18·9	13·4
Sunderland	21·4	14·1	19·0
Surrey	16·1	10·1	9·3
Wakefield	30·8	23·8	21·5
Walsall	33·1	20·7	19·9
Warwickshire	20·2	9·2	14·2

LEAs	1977-78	1982-83	1987-88
West Sussex	15·8	8·9	7·3
Wigan	23·9	15·8	11·6
Wiltshire	18·6	10·3	13·1
Wirral	18·6	15·5	20·6
Regions			
North	19·1	14·8	16·5
Yorkshire and Humberside	23·4	19·1	18·6
North West	24·8	21·2	20·3
East Midlands	24·4	15·1	15·1
West Midlands	27·3	17·3	16·2
East Anglia	26·4	19·5	14·7
Greater London	25·0	20·4	20·1
Other South East	19·0	12·7	12·5
South West	19·9	11·9	11·9
Total	22·9	16·7	16·2

[1] Including the Isles of Scilly.

TRANSPORT

British Rail

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of British Rail to discuss issues regarding rail transportation in Britain and the implications of 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I met the chairman of British Rail on 22 May, when we discussed a variety of railway matters. The single market will present opportunities for rail in Europe, and the Government support policy initiatives by the Commission to increase the competitiveness of the railways.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many staff are employed by his Department; and what proportion of them are employed in each of the standard regions.

Mr. Atkins: 16,560 staff are employed by the Department of Transport and its executive agencies. The regional breakdown of this total is as follows:

	Numbers
London area	3,810
South East	2,270
South West	1,180
East Anglia	320
East Midlands	560
West Midlands	810
North West	860
Yorkshire and Humberside	700
Northern	440
Scotland	750
Wales	4,830
Northern Ireland	30
	16,560

Figures derived from computerised staff records and rounded to nearest 10.

Public Appointments

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the full-time and part-time appointments for which he is responsible, together with the salary and the date when the appointment is due for renewal.

Mr. Atkins: The majority of the appointments for which my right hon. Friend is responsible are listed in either "Public Bodies 1989" published by HMSO or "Women into Public Appointments" produced by the Women's National Commission. A copy of the former is available in the Library of the House, and an up-to-date version of the latter will be available there in June. The appointments which are not listed in either document are:

Acting conservator of the River Mersey (£6,755 per annum).

Delegate to the Central Rhine Commission (unpaid).

Chairman and members of the honorary medical advisory panel on driving and diabetes (unpaid).

Chairman and members of the honorary medical advisory panel for driving and disorders of the nervous system (unpaid).

Chairman and members of the honorary medical advisory panel on driving and cardiovascular disorders (unpaid).

The further information sought by the hon. Member could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Peat

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if his Department intends to replace the use of peat with refuse-derived humus in major landscaping projects.

Mr. Atkins: My Department is undertaking trials with alternatives to peat for tree planting. Refuse-based products have so far been rejected because of contamination. If a better formulation can be offered my Department will test it.

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many tonnes of peat his Department uses in landscaping programmes each year;

(2) how many tons of peat his Department uses each year.

Mr. Atkins: My Department used 7,500 tonnes of peat-based composts in connection with tree and shrub planting in the 1989-90 planting season.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he received Eurorail's proposals for a high speed channel tunnel rail link; and when he proposes to publish his response to them.

Mr. Freeman: A report was received on 2 April on the work Eurorail and British Rail have done together since November 1989, together with financial projections for a joint venture to finance, own and operate international rail passenger services. My right hon. Friend received a presentation from BR and Eurorail on 19 April. The proposals are complex and require careful consideration, but I hope that an announcement can be made shortly.

TGV Atlantique

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his reply of 17 May, which Ministers currently in his Department visited the TGV Atlantique route in France; and what were the dates of their visits.

Mr. Freeman: My hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic visited the TGV Atlantique on 4 April 1990. My hon. Friend the then Minister for Public Transport, now the Minister for Local Government and Inner cities, visited the project on 20 June 1989.

Bus Deregulation

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent reports he has received as to the impact of deregulation on the use of buses.

Mr. Freeman: The transport and road research laboratory have produced a wide range of reports on the impact of bus deregulation, copies of which are available in the Library.

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what studies his Department has carried out on the effect of bus deregulation in town centres affected by traffic congestion.

Mr. Freeman: Immediately after deregulation, the tranport and road research laboratory carried out an extensive research programme into the effects of deregulation. Copies of its reports are available in the Library.

South Essex Transport

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to be able to respond to the report "South Essex Transport—A Preliminary Report," sent to him by the hon. Member for Billericay in April.

Mr. Atkins: I am considering the report and will write to the hon. Member shortly.

Aviation Safety

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will arrange for a public inquiry into aviation authorities and passenger safety following investigations in the United States regarding the bombing of Pan Am flight 103.

Mr. McLoughlin: The disaster itself is already the subject of a major police investigation, which covers the handling of the flight at Heathrow, including the aviation security aspects. The air accident investigation branch is investigating the immediate cause of the crash, and the Lord Advocate has announced that it is his view that a fatal accident inquiry should be held into the circumstances of the Lockerbie disaster deaths. In such an inquiry the sheriff is required to make findings as to the cause of the accident and any reasonable precautions whereby the deaths and accident might have been avoided, so far as they have been established to his satisfaction. Since the disaster, the Department has carried out a thorough review of its aviation security requirements, and a number of far-reaching improvements have been introduced or are in train. In addition the Transport Select Committee has examined airport security in the light of the disaster and published a very full report. In the circumstances, I do not consider any further inquiry to be necessary.

Radioactive Material Transport

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those ports which in 1989 were used for the import or export of radioactive material.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department does not collect data of the kind requested.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether passenger ferries are permitted to carry nuclear fuel, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The carriage of spent nuclear fuel on passenger ferries is permitted within the conditions prescribed for such transport in the international maritime dangerous goods code.

Oil Pollution

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many oil-carrying vessels are not registered in a state which is a signatory to the international convention on civil liability for oil pollution damage, navigate the English channel each year.

Mr. McLoughlin: There are no mandatory requirements for oil tankers to report their passage through the English Channel to United Kingdom authorities; the information requested is not therefore available. However, if a laden tanker not registered in a state signatory to the civil liability convention spills oil and causes damage to the United Kingdom or United Kingdom interests, compensation for pollution, including clean-up costs, can be obtained under the convention on the establishment of an international fund for compensation for oil pollution damage 1971 and the 1976 protocol thereto, to which the United Kingdom is a signatory. This compensation fund is financed by the major oil importers in member states.

London Underground

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his Department's assessment of the need and urgency of *(a)* new underground lines and *(b)* extension of existing lines to solve peak hour passenger congestion in London.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to the report of the central London rail study published in January 1989, a copy of which is in the Library, and to the reply my right hon. Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) on 16 November 1989, concerning the central and east London rail studies, at columns 398-99.

Rural Land Loss

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for each of the last 10 years the number of acres of rural land that has been lost to road schemes.

Mr. Robert Atkins: I regret that the information requested cannot be provided except at disproportionate cost.

Lorry Accidents

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the accident rate per lorry mile travelled within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Atkins: In 1988, goods vehicles with unladen weight of 1·5 tonnes or more were involved in 13,219 accidents involving personal injury in the United Kingdom. Total traffic for the same class of vehicle was around 27·4 billion vehicle-kilometres, giving a rate of roughly one injury accident for every 2 million vehicle-kilometres. Information on non-injury accidents is not available.

Motorcyclists

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research his Department is currently conducting, or intends to conduct, into the use of daytime motorcycle headlights as a conspicuity aid.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 21 May 1990]:* The transport and road research laboratory has conducted a considerable amount of research into motor cycle conspicuity, with regard to both running lights, and to the riders' clothing. The results of this research have been reported in TRRL report LR1137 and, most recently, in a paper to the 1990 Society of Automobile Engineers conference.

I am sending a copy to the hon. Member.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Antarctica

114. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his Department's responsibilities in respect of the environmental protection of Antarctica.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is responsible for environmental aspects of the Antarctic treaty system. These include the agreed measures for the conservation of Antarctic fauna and flora, the convention for the conservation of Antarctic seals, the convention for the conservation of Antarctic marine living resources, the convention on the regulation of Antarctic mineral resource activities and a large number of recommendations adopted under the Antarctic treaty.

The Department of Education and Science provides funds to assist the British Antarctic Survey with waste disposal and environmental management at its existing bases, with the clean-up of abandoned sites and to safeguard the environment at Rothera point where the airstrip is under construction.

The Department of the Environment has a general responsibility for ensuring that environmental factors are given full weight.

East Germany

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultations he has had with the East German authorities to enable British passport holders to visit East Germany without the necessity of obtaining a visa.

Mr. Sainsbury: Officials are now negotiating the text of a reciprocal visa abolition agreement with the embassy of the German Democratic Republic.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many staff are employed by his Department; and what proportion of them are employed in each of the standard regions.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (diplomatic wing and ODA) has 7,853 staff on its establishment. Of these, 5,109 are employed in the United Kingdom and 2,744 overseas.

The United Kingdom staff are divided between the south-east (including London) 4,582, and Scotland 527. Of the staff in the south-east, approximately 1,600 work outside inner London.

Public Appointments

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the full-time and part-time public appointments for which he is responsible, together with the salary and the date when each appointment is due for renewal.

Mr. Sainsbury: The most recent information available for public appointments for which the diplomatic and aid wings of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office are responsible is as follows:

Public body	*Number of appointments*	*Full/part time*	*Salary*	*Renewal date*
Advisory Committee for the Purchase of Wine	2	Part-time	Nil	March 1992
Imperial War Museum (Board of Trustees)	2	Part-time	Nil	1991 and 1993
British Council Board	2	Part-time	Nil	Indefinite
Imperial College of Science and Technology (Governing Body)	1	Part-time	Nil	Permanent
Great Britain China Centre	1	Part-time	Nil	Permanent
Great Britain East Europe Centre	1	Part-time	Nil	Permanent
Great Britain USSR Association	1	Part-time	Nil	Permanent Observer Status
Marshall Aid Commemoration Commission	10	Part-time	Nil	Various dates between October 1990 and February 1992
Universities China Committee	1	Part-time	Nil	Permanent
School of Oriental and African Studies (Governing Body)	3	Part-time	Nil	1 August 1991, 2 August 1995

Public body	Number of appoint-ments	Full/part time	Salary	Renewal date
Advisory Board to the Wilson Chair of International Politics: University College of Wales, Aberystwyth	1	Part-time	Nil	November 1992
Irish Pensions Appeals Tribunal	2	Part-time	Per diem expenses	Permanent
Commonwealth Institute: Chairman of the Scottish Committee	1	Part-time	Nil	November 1992
Commonwealth Institute: Director General	1	Full-time	Salary by negotiation between the public body and individuals concerned	April 1991
Commonwealth Institute: Member of Board of Governors	12	Part-time	Nil	Various dates between June 1990 and May 1992
Sightsavers	2	Part-time	Nil	April 1992
Commonwealth Foundation	1	Part-time	Nil	February 1993
Diplomatic Service Appeal Boards	8	Part-time	Per diem expenses	Various dates between January 1991 and September 1992
Wilton Park Academic Council	17	Part-time	Nil	Various dates between 1990 and 1992
Commonwealth Institute Chairman of Board of Governors	1	Part-time	Not salaried, incumbent paid honorarium	January 1991
Lloyd Foundation	1	Part-time	Nil	Permanent (ex officio)
Advisory Committee on Economic and Social Resources Overseas	17	Part-time	Nil	1992
Commonwealth Schools Commission	15	Part-time	Nil	Various dates between August 1990 and July 1992
Bureau of Hygiene and Tropical Diseases	6	Part-time	Nil	Indefinite
Overseas Service Pension Scheme	4	Part-time	Per diem expenses	Indefinite
Indian Family Pension Scheme	8	Part-time	Per diem expenses	Indefinite
Institute of Development Studies	22	Part-time	Per diem expenses	1992
Developing Countries Trade Agency	8	1 full-time, 7 part-time	Full-time salary by negotiation. Remainder: per diem expenses	Indefinite
Commonwealth Development Corporation	7	Part-time	Salaries by negotiation	Various dates in 1990 and 1992
Crown Agents	8	1 full-time	Salaries by negotiation	Various dates in 1991 and 1992

Hong Kong

Mr. Stevens: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he will reply to the outstanding points in the second report of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Session 1988-89, on Hong Kong.

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he will reply to the outstanding points in the second report of the Foreign Affairs Committee on Hong Kong.

Mr. Maude We will publish our further observations on the report at 1530 hours on 23 May 1990.

Foreign Compensation

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress is being made in implementing the Foreign Compensation (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (Distribution) Order 1987.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Foreign Compensation Commission, which has been assisted in the performance of administrative tasks by Price Waterhouse, will on 1 June begin making final payments from the Russian fund amounting to approximately £28·2 million, representing 24·78 per cent. of the value assigned to a claim, to successful claimants against the fund. Taking into account the two previous interim payments, the total sum paid to claimants from the fund will amount to approximately £62·4 million, representing 54·78 per cent. of the assessed value of successful claims. The disbursements commencing on 1 June will exhaust the balance in the fund.

CIVIL SERVICE

Personal Files

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister for the civil service if he has made any changes in civil service departmental procedures on personal files held on members of staff of staff as a result of the Colin Wallace affair.

Mr. Luce: No.

Outside Organisations

Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what was the level of interchange between the civil service and outside organisations in 1989.

Mr. Luce: My Department's report on the interchange of staff between the civil service and other organisations in 1989 shows that the number of long-term secondments —that is, those of at least three months' duration— between the civil service and industrial or commercial organisations increased by 24 per cent. in 1989 to 627. There was also an increase—of 6 per cent.—in the number of long-term secondments between the civil service and non-business organisations, of which there were 530 in 1989.

These figures represent a considerable advance on those for the previous year. They reflect the increased secondment activity generated by the Bridge programme which was launched by my right hon. and noble Friend the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and I in March 1989.

A copy of the 1989 interchange report has been placed in the Library.

NATIONAL FINANCE

European Bank for Reconstruction and Development

124. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the role of his Department in drawing up the statutes for the European bank for reconstruction and development.

Mr. Ryder: Her Majesty's Treasury took part in international negotiations to draw up the statutes of the European bank of reconstruction and development, consulting other departments as necessary.

Taxation (Wales)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the annual amount of direct and indirect taxation raised in Wales.

Mr. Lilley: Information is readily available only for income tax and local authority rates. For income tax the information is available only in terms of tax liabilities.

The income tax liability of residents of Wales in 1987-88, the latest available year, is estimated to have been £1·5 billion. Local authority rates in 1988-89 are estimated to have been £660 million.

TESSAs

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much he estimates will be saved by the introduction of TESSAs.

Mr. Lilley: The estimated direct revenue cost of £200 million for the TESSA scheme in 1991-92 in the Financial Statement and Budget Report is consistent with TESSA deposits averaging some £6 billion for that year. Both estimates are highly tentative.

Customs and Excise

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what expertise Customs and Excise has in determining whether objects may be used for a military purpose.

Mr. Ryder: It is not the responsibility of Customs and Excise to decide whether objects may be used for a military purpose, but it is required to consult with the Department of Trade and Industry whenever it considers that objects may require an export licence.

Electricity and Gas prices

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the likely effect of proposed price increases in the gas and electricity industries on the average household budget.

Mr. Ryder: The announced increases in gas and electricity prices for this financial year will add about 0·4 per cent. to the retail prices index once the tariffs have been fully implemented.

Hammersmith and Fulham Swaps Case

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effect of the Hammersmith and Fulham swaps case on the reputation of the United Kingdom as a financial centre; and if he intends to introduce any legislation to deal with the consequences of the case.

Mr. Ryder: Further legal proceedings are outstanding in this case. The Government will need to study the House of Lords judgment very carefully before deciding what, if any, action is required.

Car Tax

Mr. Stern: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce a reduction in car tax for new cars fitted with catalytic converters.

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. Friend has no plans to introduce a lower rate of car tax for new cars fitted with catalytic converters. European Community rules on emissions will almost certainly make catalysts essential by 1 January 1993 and a tax change for such a short interim period cannot be justified.

Inland Revenue

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether any changes are proposed in the cash limit and running cost limit for 1990-91 for the Inland Revenue.

Mr. Lilley: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class XVIII, vote 7 will be increased by £29 million from £1,348,913,000 to £1,377,913,000 and the Department's running cost limit by £25 million from £1,291,363,000 to £1,316,363,000. The change in running costs arises from work consequent on the decision to introduce new arrangements for the taxation of bank and building society interest in 1991-92 and other work necessary to enable the Department to meet its forecast workloads. The change in the cash limit also includes amounts for capital expenditure for computers and accommodation for the new bank and building society interest arrangements partially offset by a consequential reduction in other planned expenditure on computer equipment. This increase will be charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

EC Financial Perspective

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the revision of the European Community financial perspective.

Mr. Ryder: Under article 12 of the inter-institutional agreement (IIA), a substantive revision of the financial perspective requires a joint decision of the Council and the European Parliament. On 21 May, the Council approved a revision based on texts negotiated by the Presidency and representatives of the Parliament. Final ratification by the Parliament will now be sought.

The article 12 revision provides for a net increase in the financial perspective of 200 mecu (£147 million) in 1990, 1,225 mecu (£894 million) in 1991 and 1,478 mecu (£1,080 million) in 1992. Around two thirds of the total increase over the period is to accommodate expenditure on assistance to central and eastern Europe. Under the terms of the revision, the amounts set aside for this assistance can be used for no other purpose without a further joint decision by the Council and the Parliament. Most of the remaining increase in the ceilings will be devoted to expenditure on aid to Mediterranean, Asian and Latin American countries; and on completion of the internal market. There is also extra provision for the structural funds in 1991 and for administrative expenditure in 1992.

The overall net increase for each year is within the contingency margin of 0·03 per cent. of Community GNP specified in article 12 of the IIA. But there is a difference of view in relation to this margin. The Commission and the Parliament believe that it can be reconstituted—ie, used more than once—provided that the overall expenditure ceiling in the financial perspective is within the legally binding ceiling on member states' contributions. The Council, however, believes that the margin is available only once and cannot be reconstituted: it has accordingly declared that it will

"deem inadmissible any article 12 revision proposal reliant on a partial or complete reconstruction of the margin."

On this basis, any future article 12 revision would have to be confined within the headroom which remains after the current revision. That headroom totals 895 mecu (£655 million) in 1990, 300 mecu (£220 million) in 1991, 105 mecu (£75 million) in 1992.

The revised expenditure ceilings in the financial prespective are comfortably within the ceilings on member states' contributions. In 1990, for example, the headroom is equivalent to 0·09 per cent. of Community GNP, or around £3·1 billion.

Married Women (Savings)

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the numbers of married women who have savings of *(a)* under £3,000, *(b)* under £10,000 and *(c)* under £16,000.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 21 May 1990]:* Direct estimates of the savings held by married women are not available. Estimates based on a projection of levels of investment income reported in the 1987-88 survey of personal incomes and estimated rates of return are given in the following table. Estimates are subject to a large degree of uncertainty.

Savings of married women 1989-90

Savings	*Number of married women (millions)*
Under £3,000[1]	8½
£ 3,000 to £10,000	4
£10,000 to £16,000	½

[1] Includes no reported savings.

Next Steps Agencies

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what criteria govern the selection of chief executives of "next steps" executive agencies; and what pay arrangements have been made for these appointments.

Mr. Ryder: The first priority in selecting chief executives and other key staff for agencies must be to get the right person for the job. This principle is crucial to the success of agencies. In each case the starting point is to define the job to be done. Then it is necessary to examine what skills will be required for the job; to consider where those skills can best be found; to take account of what is needed to attract, motivate and retain somewone with those skills; and then choose the most appropriate method of selection. Open competition will be considered in every case as a potential means of attracting talented people from inside and outside the service. Pay is usually based on normal civil service arrangements but more is offered if this is necessary to secure the right person. In any case there is usually a significant performance based element. Next Steps is an evolving initiative, and those arrangements will progressively develop.

WALES

Therapists

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for the most recent available date the number of professionally qualified people in post in each health authority area in Wales and the number of vacancies that exist within the same disciplines as *(a)* speech therapists, *(b)* occupational therapists and *(c)* physiotherapists.

Mr. Grist: The latest information is given in the table:

Health authority	*Professionally qualified staff in post as at 30 September 1989 (whole-time equivalents)*			*Vacancies for professionally qualified staff (whole-time equivalents) as at 30 September 1988*		
	Speech therapists	*Occupational therapists*	*Physiotherapists*[1]	*Speech therapists*	*Occupational therapists*	*Physiotherapists*[1]
Clwyd	24·3	35·7	81·0	4·0	6·0	6·0
East Dyfed	15·3	16·4	39·6	—	6·9	7·2
Gwent	15·4	48·0	80·8	9·3	16·1	3·6
Gwynedd	11·7	22·3	48·6	0·5	4·0	1·3
Mid Glamorgan	18·0	38·6	70·2	2·7	9·7	10·6
Pembrokeshire	5·0	7·5	19·3	—	3·2	2·9
Powys	8·9	11·1	28·2	1·5	9·0	—
South Glamorgan	30·8	75·5	146·2	9·0	14·5	—
West Glamorgan	20·9	33·3	70·8	2·5	12·4	9·9

[1]Includes remedial gymnasts.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps are being taken to improve training facilities for speech therapists, occupational therapists and physiotherapists in Wales.

Mr. Grist: The question of training provision and training facilities for speech therapists, occupational therapists and physiotherapists in Wales is being considered in the context of the Department's consultation paper "The Health Service in Wales Towards 2000: Manpower Planning, Education and Training", responses to which are currently being considered.

Private Medical Institutions

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total number of nursing staff employed in private hospitals, homes and clinics in Wales at the most recent available date; and what was the corresponding number five years previously.

Mr. David Hunt: At 31 March 1989, there were 6,389 (4,495·5 whole-time equivalent) nursing staff working in private hospitals, nursing homes and clinics in Wales, of these 2,364 (1,602·7 WTE) had nursing qualifications. At 31 December 1983, the figures were 1,180 (861·7 WTE) and 494 (369·3 WTE) respectively.

Residential Homes (Closed Circuit Television)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy regarding the use of closed circuit television cameras in public sector and private sector nursing homes and residential homes.

Mr. David Hunt: No specific guidance has been issued on the use of closed circuit television cameras in nursing homes and residential homes.

Health Service Finance

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the criteria used for determining his distribution to district health authorities in Wales of *(a)* revenue grants and *(b)* capital allocation; and if he will indicate for each such criterion the weighting which is attached to it.

Mr. David Hunt: Revenue allocations to health authorities are historically based on the levels of expenditure on services taken over in 1974. Each year, these allocations are enhanced in respect of recurrent development funds and allowance for inflation. Those recurrent development funds which are earmarked for centrally directed developments are allocated in accordance with criteria that are specific to each category of centrally financed development eg treatment centres, regional services developments, mental health developments, information technology developments etc.

Other recurrent growth funding is distributed for the discretionary use of authorities and its distribution is weighted in favour of those authorities which are shown by the revenue formula assessment to be below their target shares of available resources. The formula is based on weighted population shares because it is recognised that the demographic factors are the prime determinants of relative need. Target shares are accordingly calculated on the basis of the latest estimates of crude population adjusted to reflect age, sex, morbidity, sparsity and seasonal variation as a result of tourism.

The formula consists of five components for non-psychiatric in-patients, non-psychiatric out-patients, community health services, the ambulance service and accident and emergency services. These components are combined in proportion to the all-Wales expenditure on the five categories of service and the resultant adjusted population shares are compared with the distribution of recurrent revenue resources (net of expenditure on regional and psychiatric services, various other supra-district services and the service costs of medical and dental teaching) to indicate relative under or over-provision.

The weighting attached to each category of service in the most recent (1990-91) formula assessment is non-psychiatric in-patients 64.48: non-psychiatric out-patients 12.01: community health services 15.70: ambulance services 4.42: accident and emergency services 3.39. These weightings, which derive from the 1988-89 annual accounts, can vary from year to year as they are dependant on annual variations in the level of all-Wales expenditure on these categories of service.

Capital Resources

The allocation of capital resources for centrally funded schemes reflects the same sort of criteria as are applied to the respective categories of centrally financed revenue developments. However, health authorities' discretionary capital provision is distributed in accordance with a capital formula. The capital formula is population-based but it also takes into account the distribution of existing NHS capital stock across Wales. It consists of three component: a population based components which takes projected population figures for the next decade and weights them for age/sex, anticipated cross-boundary flow and standardised mortality ratios; a replacement component which takes recurrent revenue allocations as a proxy indicator for capital maintenance and upgrading needs and an equalisation component which reflects the relative capital assets of the respective authorities on the basis of an index of capital stock per capita. These components are combined in the ratio of 25:25:50 to provide the overall capital formula share.

The objective of both the revenue and capital formulae is to ensure that funds are distributed in a way which leads to a progressive equalisation of resources between authorities. Those authorities shown by the formulae to be relatively less well resourced receive a greater proportional share of discretionary revenue growth and capital funding than those which are relatively better resourced, thereby enabling them to catch up steadily and thus reduce the range of disparity.

Meningitis

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing the number of cases of meningitis newly diagnosed in Wales in each of the past 10 years, if possible by the various categories of meningitis which are indentifiable.

Mr. David Hunt: The available data are given in the following table:

Notifications of Acute Meningitis to Office of Population Census and Surveys

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	[1]1989
Meningococcal	42	41	23	32	34	39	67	71	102	91
Pneumococcal	[2]. .	[2]. .	6	4	7	7	9	6	9	12
Influenzal	[2]. .	[2]. .	12	19	13	11	28	29	34	41
Viral	[2]. .	[2]. .	10	5	10	13	21	9	21	8
Other Specified	75	28	17	9	7	6	12	13	34	27
Other Unspecified	36	15	6	2	7	8	10	10	13	8

Sources: 1980-87—Communicable Disease Statistics (Series MB2 Nos. 7-13).
1988-89—Unpublished figures from Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.
[1]Provisional.
[2]. .—Not available.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will review the working of his community charge with regard to its application to women's aid refuges; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Guidance on the registration of women in refuges has already been issued to community charge registration officers. If evidence can be provided that Welsh CCROs are generally designating women's refuges for the collective community charge, I will consider whether there is a case for further guidance to remind them of the appropriate criteria for designation.

District Health Authorities

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what involvement his office has in the appointments of general managers to district health authorities; and whether any changes are proposed.

Mr. Grist: Responsibility for appointing a district general manager rests solely with the health authority concerned. While the director NHS Wales is always prepared to give advice and assistance during the selection process, should this be asked for, and has issued guidance to health authority chairmen on the procedures to be followed prior to an appointment being made, the Department has no other involvement in the process.

No changes in the current arrangements are proposed.

Urban Aid

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will make it his policy to publish the circular setting out the criteria for urban aid applications for 1991-92 in time to allow *(a)* applicants to draw up considered and well-planned applications, and *(b)* an early date for decisions so that successful applicants are able to make the best use of grants offered.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on Monday 21 May at columns *53-57*.

Chemical Waste, Rhymney

Mr. Livsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has on the storage of chemical waste in Rhymney; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: On 30 March 1990, Rhymney Valley district council, under the provisions of part I of the Control of Pollution Act 1974, licensed Euromet Ltd. to store drummed waste at the Capital Valley industrial park, Rhymney.

On 3 May, the council revoked the licence, with effect from 26 May, on the grounds that continuation of activities on the site would cause pollution of water. The company has appealed against the council's decision, and under the Act's provisions, the revocation is ineffective pending a decision on the appeal.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Inner City Task Forces

115. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the progress of the work of the inner city task forces.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Responsibility for inner city task forces rests with the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

The inner city task forces have continued to make good progress in meeting their objectives of securing more jobs and training for local people and encouraging local enterprise. In the financial year 1989-90, task forces committed about £15·5 million—which in turn levered almost £23·5 million from private and public funds—in support of 562 projects. These were expected to generate, or safeguard, over 6,200 jobs, facilitate over 22,000 training places and provide support for 3,584 new and existing businesses. A recent report entitled "Task Forces in Action" outlining progress in individual task forces is available in the Library.

I announced on 28 February, as part of the Government's action for cities anniversary announcements, that the task forces would be withdrawing from Doncaster and Rochdale; and that new task forces would be opening in Derby and the Wirral. I also extended the existing task force in north Kensington into part of the neighbouring borough of Hammersmith and Fulham; it has now been renamed the west London task force.

Atlas Steel Foundry

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry at what cost he instructed Mr. Heriot Currie to appear in Lord Milligan's court on Friday 18 May in relation to the Atlas steel foundry, Armadale; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: It is not usual practice to disclose fees paid individual counsel in a particular case.

The Office of Fair Trading has now completed negotiations: William Cook plc have given signed undertakings to the Secretary of State. The undertakings given to the Secretary of State reflect the undertakings given to the Court of Session on 18 May. In relation to the assets of Armadale steel works, they are as follows:

"William Cook plc will and will procure that its subsidiaries will:

—ensure that no assets of the Armadale Steel Works owned by the Company ("Acquired Assets") are disposed of, and reasonable steps are taken to prevent deterioration of those assets; so far as such assets remain at Armadale Foundry, such reasonable steps shall be taken so far as is consistent with the fact that those assets are no longer in use; in so far as assets are removed from Armadale Foundry, all reasonable steps will be taken to prevent serious damage to the Foundry or to the assets removed or to any other assets;

—if the Secretary of State so requires, following an adverse finding by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, return to the Armadale Steel Works any Acquired Assets which have been removed from it;

—provide promptly to the Director General of Fair Trading such information as he may reasonably require to ascertain what steps have been taken to ensure that the undertakings above (and other undertakings relating to the business of Lloyds (Burton) Limited) are being fulfilled.

HEALTH

Community Care

118. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are his best estimates of the additional costs already to be incurred by local authorities in 1991-92 due to the new legislation on community care.

Mr. Dorrell: Our estimates of the financial implications for local authorities of the National Health Service and Community Care Bill are provided in the explanatory and financial memorandum to the Bill. The overall cost of our community care proposals, outlined in the White Paper "Caring for People", is being considered in the current public expenditure survey.

NHS (Expenditure)

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give for each five year period from 1960 to the present the amount spent on the National Health Service, expressing it as *(a)* a percentage of the United Kingdom domestic product and *(b)* for each five years the percentage increase over the previous five years.

Mr. Dorrell: Health Departments' expenditure figures for the United Kingdom are available on a financial year basis only and because of changes in definition it is not possible to produce a consistent run of figures beginning before 1974-75. Figures as requested for the period 1975-76 to 1989-90 are set out in the table.

	Total NHS expenditure (gross) in UK (1989-90 prices)	*NHS expenditure in UK as percentage of UK GDP*	*Real terms percentage increase over previous five years*
1975-76 to 1979-80	£94,074m	4·8	[1]—
1980-81 to 1984-85	£110,085m	5·3	17
1985-86 to 1989-90	£123,735m	5·1	12

[1] Figure unavailable.

Eye Disease

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what study his Department has funded into the relationship between age and eye disease.

Mr. Dorrell: The Department has not funded any specific research into this aspect of eye disease. Nevertheless, the Medical Research Council is funding a considerable amount of research on vision.

Medicine Imports

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what reports his Department has received of illegal parallel imports of medicines reaching the pharmaceutical wholesaling chain in the United Kingdom since 1 January; from which countries such products originated; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Since 1 January 1990 four reports of illegal parallel imports reaching the pharmaceutical wholesaling chain have been received. All such reports are investigated. Under section 118 of the Medicines Act 1968, details of investigations are confidential.

King's College Hospital, Camberwell

Ms. Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether King's College hospital in Camberwell remains interested in forming a self-governing trust.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Yes.

Sight Tests

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the expected cost of the NOP survey into the volume of sight tests in the first quarter of 1990; and what was the survey method used.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The questions on sight test take-up were included as part of the regular NOP weekly omnibus survey. They were repeated over a five-week period and provided a random sample of some 10,000 adults. The cost of the survey is a commercial matter between the Department of Health and NOP.

Kidney Transplants

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients are awaiting kidney transplant operations; and what measures are being taken to encourage more people to carry donor cards.

Mr. Dorrell: According to information provided by the United Kingdom transplant service, the number of United Kingdom patients waiting for a cadaveric kidney transplant on 11 May 1990 was 3,543.

For details of the measures being taken to improve the availability of donor organs, I refer the hon. Member to the reply my hon. Friend the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health gave my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) on 5 April, at columns *736-37*.

GPs' Contracts

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how the new general practitioners contract will affect provisions for homeless people.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Homeless people have exactly the same rights as others to health services. The improved

services arising from the GPs' new contract are therefore available to them. The problem is reaching the homeless in the first place and encouraging them to come forward for the services which they need. The new fee payable to GPs who register patients and do a health check should help encourage GPs to register homeless people. Under the reforms in the White Paper, "Promoting Better Health", family practitioner committees are required to assess the health needs of all sectors of their local populations and actively to develop services to meet those needs. In areas where there are homeless people, family practitioner committees and district health authorities need to take account of the special needs of these groups in planning local services. Pilot projects have been funded in City and east London and Camden and Islington FPC areas to assess the needs of the homeless people and to work out the best way of delivering primary care to them. A summary of a Policy Studies Institute report on the projects has been circulated to all FPCs (and to other health and local authorities) so that as similar schemes are considered the lessons learned are shared.

General Practitioners (Deprivation Allowances)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of deprivation allowances to general practitioners under the terms of the new contract in each family practitioner committee area.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health is he will list for each family practitioner committee area the areas which qualify for low, medium and high deprivation allowances within the terms of the new general practitioner contract.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how he has asked family practitioner committees to identify areas of low, medium and high deprivation for the purposes of payments of deprivation allowances under the terms of the new general practitioner contract.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In introducing deprivation payments for the first time into the general practitioner remuneration system the Government are using the analysis developed by Professor Jarman, professor of primary health care at St. Mary's hospital medical school. His index makes it possible to identify deprived areas by ward according to a score based on key factors such as the level of unemployment, numbers of elderly people living alone and extent of household overcrowding. Family practitioner committees have been supplied with software which will enable payments to be made to general practitioners automatically every quarter by linking patients' postcodes to postcodes in the wards classified as deprived.

General Practitioners Contract

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the additional payments and allowances for patients from deprived areas within the new general practitioner contract.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The amounts payable in respect of patients living in areas of deprivation are as follows:

	From 1 April 1990 £ pa	*From 1 January 1991 £ pa*
For each patient resident in an area with a high level of deprivation	8·50	8·80
For each patient resident in an area with a medium level of deprivation	6·40	6·65
For each patient resident in an area with a low level of deprivation	4·90	5·05

These figures represent an increase of 71 per cent., 53 per cent. and 41 per cent. respectively compared to the standard capitation fees.

Transfusion Centres

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Chelmsford, (Mr. Burns), *Official Report*, 30 April, columns 408-9, which regional transfusion centres have adopted the new arrangements referred to from 1 April.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The south London and south western regional transfusion centres have introduced the new arrangements from 1 April this year. These new arrangements in no way alter the fact that there are no charges for the blood which is freely donated in this country.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many staff are employed by his Department; and what proportion of them are employed in each of the standard regions.

Mr. Dorrell: On 1 April 1990 the number of staff employed by the Department of Health was 5,388. Information on the numbers employed in each of the standard regions is not readily available, although just over one third of the staff are based outside London in various locations throughout England.

Public Appointments

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the full time and part time public appointments for which he is responsible, together with the salary and the date when the appointment is due for renewal.

Mr. Dorrell: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State is responsible for approximately 4,600 full and part-time public appointments.

Details of each of these could be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, details of public appointments to bodies sponsored by the Department of Health can be obtained from the Cabinet Office publication "Public Bodies 1989". A copy is available in the Library. Details of salaries or fees can be obtained from the same source.

Meningitis Vaccination

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects meningitis vaccination to be a routine part of the vaccination programme.

Mr. Dorrell: Routine vaccination with meningococcal vaccine is not recommended because the risk of meningococcal meningitis is low and, at present, there is no effective vaccine against meningococcal group B organisms which are the major cause of meningococcal disease in this country. However, there is an active programme of research into the development of such a vaccine.

Meningococcal vaccines effective against serotype A and C organisms are already available. Vaccine is given, in addition to chemoprophylaxis, to immediate family and close contacts of cases of serotype A and C meningitis. The vaccine is also available to those travelling to areas of the world where meningococcal vaccination is required or advisable.

Full details about meningococcal vaccines can be found in the 1990 edition of "Immunisation Against Infectious Disease", copies of which have been placed in the Library.

Whooping Cough and Meningitis

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children have *(a)* died and *(b)* suffered serious handicap as a result of (i) whooping cough and (ii) meningitis in each of the last four years.

Mr. Dorrell: The figures for deaths among children aged 0 to 14 years in England and Wales reported to the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys were as follows:

Year	*Whooping cough*	*Meningococcal infection*	*Meningococcal meningitis*
1986	3	84	15
1987	4	95	17
1988	0	109	21
[1]1989	1	117	25

[1] provisional.

The figures for meningococcal meningitis are included within those for meningococcal infection.

The total notifications for the same period were:

Year	*Whooping cough*	*Meningococcal infection*	*Meningococcal meningitis*
1986	34,695	1,462	582
1987	14,405	1,717	744
1988	4,874	1,876	864
[1]1989	11,066	1,776	758

[1] provisional.

It is not possible to say how many of these have led to serious handicap.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the total of Government expenditure on *(a)* research, *(b)* promoting and *(c)* administering vaccines against (i) whooping cough and (ii) meningitis in each of the last four years.

Mr. Dorrell: The Department has directly funded research as follows:

	Meningitis £	*Whooping cough* £
1986-87	16,600	28,000
1987-88	16,600	28,500
1988-89	27,200	5,200
1989-90	12,400	Nil

The Medical Research Council, which is funded by the Department of Education and Science, has provided funds for research wholly or partly related to the two diseases as follows:

	Meningitis £	*Whooping cough* £
1985-86	27,000	67,000
1986-87	144,000	137,000
1987-88	216,000	194,000
1988-89	161,000	273,000

The figure for 1989-90 is not yet available.

It is not possible to provide figures for promotion or administration relating specifically to whooping cough and meningitis vaccines.

Centre for Applied Microbiology Research

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether he intends to grant additional exclusive rights to Porton International Limited, the centre for applied microbiology research;

(2) when he expects to announce a decision on the future of the centre for applied microbiology research;

(3) when he expects to conclude his review of the public health laboratory service.

Mr. Dorrell: I have nothing to add to the reply my hon. Friend the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State gave my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) on 19 April, at column *990*.

Disabled Persons

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many physically disabled persons aged *(a)* 16 to 24 years and *(b)* 25 to 64 years are long-stay residents in hospital units or wards or residential care homes; and how many of them are in institutions designated for younger disabled people.

Mr. Dorrell: Information is not held in the form requested.

Immunisation

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the most recent figures for the uptake of measles, pertussis, diphtheria and tetanus, and polio immunisation in each of the countries of the European Community.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 21 May 1990]:* The latest confirmed figures for England are for 1988-89, as follows:

	Per cent.
Diphtheria, tetanus and polio	87
Measles	80
Pertussis	75

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland are responsible for the figures in those countries, but I understand that they have each achieved comparable levels to England.

A programme for more rapid evaluation of immunisation uptake in England is undertaken by the public health laboratory service's communicable disease surveillance centre, and I am pleased to say this indicates that by February 1990 uptake had reached 88 per cent. for diphtheria, tetanus and polio, 85 per cent. for measles and 80 per cent. for pertussis.

The most recent figures for the other countries in the European Community are as follows:

	Diphtheria Pertussis[1] *Tetanus*	*Polio*	*Measles*
Belgium	95	97	50
Denmark	88	100	82
France	96	97	41
Germany (Federal Republic)	97	95	50
Greece	83	98	82
Ireland (Republic of)	45	90	63
Italy	88	95	21
Luxembourg	79	90	70
Netherlands	97	97	93
Portugal	78	80	84
Spain	74	78	81

[1] Figures for pertussis are not available separately.

The figures shown in the table are for 1988, except in the cases of France, Germany and Ireland, where figures for earlier years are the latest available. I should also point out that the basis for calculating immunisation uptake varies widely from country to country. The basis used in this country—the number of children immunised by their second birthday against the number of such children resident in the district—is acknowledged to be one of the most reliable and accurate available.

ENERGY

Acid Rain

119. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what level of expenditure is planned over the next 10 years to reduce the amount of gases causing acid rain emitted from coal-fired power stations.

Mr. Baldry: This is a matter for the industry and will depend on the options used to reduce emissions. However, the industry has stated that it will retrofit flue gas desulphurisation plant to 8GW of existing power stations. This, along with a programme to fit low nox burners to 12 of the largest power stations, will cost around £1·4 billion.

Peat

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what factors were taken into account in deciding to classify peat as a renewable resource for its review of renewable energy sources.

Mr. Peter Morrison: While peat is not a renewable energy source, it is generally considered as an alternative fuel under the generic title Biofuels.

Within our Biofuels research, development and demonstration programme we are carrying out a limited study on peat as a fuel which is due to be completed this year. The objectives of the work are to examine the characteristics of a range of Scottish peats and also the suitability of several combustion appliances for coal, when used with peat. In addition, my Department is currently considering its future policy towards peat as a fuel in consultation with other interested Departments.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many staff are employed by his Department; and what proportion of them are employed in each of the standard regions.

Mr. Wakeham: I refer the hon. Member to "Civil Service Statistics 1988-89, Table 3", a copy of which is in the House of Commons Library.

Public Appointments

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the full-time and part-time public appointments for which he is responsible, together with the salary and the date when each appointment is due for renewal.

Mr. Wakeham: Details of appointments for which I am responsible are published annually in "Public Bodies" and "Women into Public Appointments". "Public Bodies" is available in the Library of the House. The latest edition of "Women into Public Appointments" is to be published next month: a copy will be placed in the Library.

Mixed Oxide Fuel

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the potential uses of mixed oxide fuel.

Mr. Baldry: Mixed oxide fuel can be used in either thermal or fast reactors for generating electricity.

Sellafield

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what quantity of fuel stored at Sellafield is awaiting processing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: I understand from British Nuclear Fuels plc that, at 31 March 1990, the quantity of irradiated fuel from United Kingdom and overseas civil reactors awaiting reprocessing at Sellafield amounted to some 700 tonnes of uranium as spent magnox fuel and some 3,500 tonnes of uranium as spent oxide fuel. Reprocessing of oxide fuel at Sellafield will start in late 1992 when the thermal oxide reprocessing plant is expected to begin commercial reprocessing.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any plans to amend the Nuclear Installations Act 1965 so as to bring repositories of radioactive waste within its scope; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The Government are well aware of the need to provide for the licensing of radioactive waste repositories and propose to introduce regulations to achieve this at an appropriate time.

Office of Electricity Regulation

Mr. Arbuthnot: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether any changes will be made to the Office of Electricity Regulation's cash limit for 1990-91.

Mr. Wakeham: A supplementary estimate will be sought by the Director General of the Office of Electricity Regulation, who is accountable for this vote.

Subject to parliamentary approval of the supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class V, vote 8 relating to expenditure by the Office of Electricity Regulation will be increased by £1,500,000 from £10,635,000 to £12,135,000 to provide for slippage of setting up costs from 1989-90 into 1990-91. This increase will be charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Local Government Finance

122. **Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will detail the numbers of those claiming rebates under the terms of the poll tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Information about the number of recipients of community charge benefit will be available in the Autumn of this year and details of the number of claims for community charge benefit will be available in 1991. It is estimated that the average number of community charge benefit cases in Great Britain in 1990-91 will be in excess of 8 million which, since a couple are treated as one benefit unit, equates with about 10 million individuals.

123. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received concerning eligibility for community charge rebates.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) on 28 March at column *204-5*. In the two months since that reply, the Department has received a further 985 items of correspondence about the community charge benefit scheme.

Appeal Tribunals

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Don Valley, on 24 April, *Official Report*, column *155*, if he will list by year for the last 10 years for social security appeal tribunals in the North-East England region, the cost of hearing successful claimant appeals in respect of *(a)* disablement benefit and *(b)* mobility allowance; and if he will show in his answer for each category, and by year, how much the successful claimants appeals were worth financially.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The figures quoted are current costs for Great Britain and apply whether an appeal is successful or unsuccessful. The current average cost of a social security appeal tribunal hearing in relation to disablement benefit is £187. The current average cost of a medical appeal tribunal hearing in relation to disablement benefit is £120 in respect of the tribunal alone. The administrative cost of preparing the submission to the tribunal with supporting medical evidence is usually much greater involving as it can the obtaining of consultants' reports. The complexities of each case vary enormously and detailed costings could be supplied only at disproportionate cost but the administrative cost is estimated to be in the region of £700. The current average cost of a social security appeal tribunal hearing in relation to a mobility allowance is £178. The current average cost of a medical appeal tribunal hearing in relation to mobility allowance is £185. I regret that records are not kept of the amount of benefit paid as a result of favourable decisions.

State Earnings-related Pensions

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide estimates for each of the years 1987-88, 1988-89 and 1989-90 of the percentage of employees contracted out of SERPS.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Government Actuary estimates that for the years 1987-88, 1988-89 and 1989-90 the percentage of employees contracted out of SERPS was 56 per cent., 55 per cent. and 58 per cent., respectively.

Benefit Claimants

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to the reply of 3 May, *Official Report*, column *635*, about income support deductions for non-payment of poll tax, how many people have had deductions of *(a)* more than £5 per week, *(b)* £4 to £5 per week, *(c)* £3 to £4 per week, *(d)* £2 to £3 per week, *(e)* £1 to £2 per week and *(f)* less than £1 per week.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Deductions from income support in respect of community charge liability are made at one of two rates: either £1·85 in respect of individual liability or £2·75 in respect of the joint and several liability of a couple, both of whom are on income support. The

information required to break the figure provided in the earlier reply into these categories is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Community Charge

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give details of the number of manual entries made each week by his Department in the administration of the benefit system before 31 March and as a result of extra entries due to the community charge changes, after 1 April.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Details of the number of manual entries made each week by the Department in the administration of the benefit system before 31 March and as a result of extra entries due to the community charge changes, after 1 April, are not readily available and could be obtained only at a disproportionate cost.

Social Security Upratings

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how the weighted poll tax average of £340 was calculated in the reply given to the hon. Member for Newcastle, Central on 4 May, *Official Report*, column *683*.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The figure of £340 represents the average over all income support recipients and their partners of the amount appropriate to each individual included in the benefit they receive.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) whether it will be the intention in future social security upratings *(a)* to announce the poll tax or community charge assumptions made for income support and *(b)* to take account of the withdrawal of the transitional relief system;

(2) on what basis it was decided to provide for an assumed community charge or poll tax of £315 for each member of a couple and of £356 for a single person over 25 years in the benefits upratings which came into force in April; and if he will provide an estimate of the cost of providing for an assumed poll tax or community charge for a couple on the same basis as a single person over 25 years;

(3) on what basis it was decided to provide for an assumed community charge or poll tax of £315 for a single person under 25 years but £356 for a single person over 25 years in the benefits upratings which came into force in April; and if he will provide an estimate of the cost of providing for an assumed poll tax or community charge for single people under 25 years on the same basis as single people over 25 years.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: As was made clear by my right hon. Friend the former Secretary of State in October 1988, the adjustment to the income support levels to provide help towards the 20 per cent. contribution to the community charge (and also towards the contribution of 20 per cent. of local authority rates in England and Wales in 1989-90) was made on a once-for-all basis in April 1989. The amounts included became an integral part of the overall benefit rates to be uprated each year as part of the normal uprating.

The relevant amount for single people under 25 and for couples was £1·15 a head in April 1989. At that time, the rate for single people aged 25 or over already included £1·30 a week as assistance towards their contribution to local authority rates, and it was decided not to reduce it. It is these figures which, allowing for the effect of the uprating in April this year, correspond to 20 per cent. of an annual payment of £315 and £356, respectively. The cost of levelling up for all claimants to the higher figure —which would of course exceed 20 per cent. of the average community charge after transitional relief in Great Britain in 1990-91—would be £36 million in a full year.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many staff are employed by his Department; and what proportion of them are employed in each of the standard regions.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The total number of staff employed in the Department as at 1 April 1990 was 80,892.

The proportion employed in each of the standard economic planning regions is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Around a quarter of the Department's staff are employed mainly in London, Newcastle and North Fylde; three quarters are employed in the local office network, which is organised into seven regions as follows:

Region	*Per cent.*
London North	11·0
London South	11·1
Midlands	11·5
North Western	11·1
North Eastern	11·6
Wales and South West	9·7
Scotland	9·7

Community Charge Benefit

Mr. Latham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the cost to the public funds in the current financial year and with retrospective effect to 6 April, of entitling all pensioners who are married or living together to be granted separately a communty charge rebate.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I regret that it is not possible to provide my hon. Friend with the information requested. It is a fundamental principle of the income-related benefit system that married and unmarried couples are assessed together. The wide range of assumptions needed would make any estimate of the additional costs of assessing pensioner couples separately for community charge benefit both arbitrary and uncertain.

Family Credit

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, for each month since April 1988, what proportion of decisions on new and repeat family credit claims, respectively, resulted in an award of benefit; how many awards were current at the end of each month; and what was the total caseload at the end of each month, including subsequent backdated awards.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 14 May 1990]:* The available information is in the table.

	Percentage of family credit decisions resulting in award of benefit			*Family credit awards current at month end*	*Family credit caseload at month end (including backdated awards)*
	New Claims[1]	*Renewal Claims*[1]	*Total Claims*	*(thousands)*	*(thousands)*
1988					
April	—	—	62·5	194	[2]243
May				215	261
June	—	—	68·4	236	282
July	—	—	68·2	243	283
August	—	—	69·1	256	284
September	—	—	69·4	242	281
October	—	—	71·5	248	282
November	—	—	72·1	261	290
December	—	—	70·3	255	285
1989					
January	—	—	68·9	250	279
February	—	—	70·7	254	282
March	—	—	70·8	254	279
April	53·8	88·7	69·3	252	286
May	35·4	86·7	49·3	235	303
June	40·0	86·5	53·2	263	311
July	47·8	86·5	60·4	275	313
August	51·4	86·5	64·8	282	314
September	51·6	86·7	65·6	289	319
October	53·1	84·0	67·2	278	314
November	51·6	82·2	66·7	274	[3]304
December	47·2	81·4	62·1	263	299
1990					
January	46·6	82·4	62·6	266	299
February	50·9	83·9	64·7	278	306
March	50·5	85·3	65·0	282	—
April	52·2	88·3	68·2	281	—

[1] Separate figures for new and renewal claims not available for the period up to March 1989.
[2] Family credit caseload figures for April 1988 to February 1989 are estimated.
[3] Family credit caseload figures for November 1989 to February 1990 are provisional.

Mr Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what changes have been made affecting the number of people entitled to family credit since April 1988; what was the estimated effect of each change; and what is the latest estimate of the number entitled.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 14 May 1990]:* The latest information about the number of families eligible for family credit is derived from a special examination of the family expenditure survey returns for the period April to December 1988 which indicated that at that time about 500,000 employees were eligible for family credit. No information is available about the number of self-employed who are eligible.

The number of families eligible for family credit at any time depends not only on the levels of the family credit rates but also on levels of net earnings and on family composition which are changing constantly. The increases in the family credit rates in April 1989 and April 1990, which on both occasions were in excess of the inflation rate, and, to a lesser extent, the amendment to the family credit regulations in April 1990 which enable more people in casual or short-term work to qualify would, in isolation, have tended to increase the eligible population; on the other hand, changes to the national insurance contributions in April 1989, October 1989 and April 1990 and to the income tax provisions in April 1989 and April 1990, and general increases in earnings would, in isolation, have tended to reduce the eligible population. But because that population is changing constantly because of these and other factors, the effect of any one change cannot reliably be estimated in isolation. An updated estimate of the overall size of the eligible population (of employees) will be possible only when information from the 1989 and, possibly, 1990 family expenditure surveys becomes available.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Whales

116. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the recent meeting at Tromso to discuss the international whaling ban.

Mr. Curry: We understand the meeting hosted by Norway was attended by Canada, the Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland and Japan and considered whale and seal research, management procedures and scientific aspects of management questions. The review of the current moratorium on commercial whaling however is to be considered by the International Whaling Commission in July. The United Kingdom will take an active role in that discussion.

117. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had with his European and Japanese counterparts concerning the preservation of species whales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Japan and Norway are in no doubt as to our view on the need for conservation of whales. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made our position clear when she met the Japanese Prime Minister earlier this year, when I met the Norwegian Minister for trade. We consult other

members of the European Community with an interest in whaling in the forum of the International Whaling Commission (IWC).

We shall continue to press strongly the case for the conservation of whales. At the IWC meeting in July we will insist there can be no question of lifting the present moratorium on commercial whaling until the scientific advice is clear that whale stocks can be sustained at healthy levels.

Eli Lilley

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on what dates since 28 November 1989 *(a)* he, *(b)* his officials and *(c)* members of the veterinary products committee have met representatives of Eli Lilley; what matters were discussed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: No such meetings with Ministers or the veterinary products committee have taken place. Officials of the veterinary medicines directorate met representatives of Eli Lilley on 12 December, 31 January and 29 March to discuss matters relating to product licence applications.

Bovine Somatotropin

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many sites are currently producing milk from cows injected with bovine somatotropin; what is the number of cows currently involved in bovine somatotropin experiments; and what is the quantity of milk collected for sale from cows injected with bovine somatotropin.

Mr. Maclean: I understand that under the terms of their animal test certificates the companies concerned are currently treating 71 cows on three sites with manufactured BST. These cows produce approximately 1,560 litres of milk daily.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the occasions within the last 12 months *(a)* he, *(b)* his officials and *(c)* members of the veterinary products committee have met representatives of Monsanto to discuss bovine somatotropin; what was the nature of these discussions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I would refer the hon. Gentleman to the replies I gave him on 13 December. Additional meetings have been held on ten occasions by officials of the veterinary medicines directorate with representatives of Monsanto to discuss questions of safety, quality or efficacy arising from the company's product licence application.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the nature of recent representations received from the National Farmers Union in respect of bovine somatotropin; and what other recent representations has he received on this subject.

Mr. Maclean: I have received no recent representations from the NFU on this subject. I have received a considerable number of representations from others expressing a variety of views.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what other European Community countries are currently undertaking research into bovine somatotropin, which involves the injection of dairy cows; and which of those countries permit milk from cows injected with bovine somatotropin to be collected and sold unlabelled to the public.

Mr. Maclean: I understand that companies are currently carrying out such trials in France, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands. Milk is collected and sold unlabelled to the public in all of these countries except the Netherlands.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has made an assessment of the implications for the farming industry of the possible introduction of bovine somatotropin; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: No. To produce an assessment of any value would require more detailed data than are yet available, and a variety of assumptions about the commercial application of bovine somatotropin were it to be approved.

Straw and Stubble Burning

Mr. Latham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture Fisheries and Food (1) whether he will make a statement on his intentions with regard to research projects at his Department's experimental husbandry farms designed to help farmers to adjust to the proposed ban on straw and stubble burning after 1992;

(2) what research he is currently funding into direct drilling techniques of cultivation suitable for use in fields of unburnt stubble which could be available to farmers after the ban on burning comes into effect;

(3) what information is to be offered by his Department's advisory service to help farmers who work on heavy clay land, or who use direct drilling techniques, to adjust to the proposed ban on straw and stubble burning.

Mr. Maclean: My Department has an extensive research commitment aimed at providing farmers with the best possible advice on handling and cultivation techniques which will help them to adapt to the proposed ban on the burning of crop residues after 1992. The research being conducted on five experimental husbandry farms, in close collaboration with the Agriculture and Food Research Council, covers a wide range of soil types including heavy clay land, and a number of cultivation techniques, including direct drilling. The results of this work are disseminated to farmers by the agricultural development and advisory service through advisory visits, publications, conferences and seminars.

Ministry Employees

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many staff are employed by his Ministry; and what proportion of them are employed in each of the standard regions.

Mr. Curry: The number of permanent and temporary staff employed by my Department on 1 April 1990 was 10,447.

The number of staff by standard planning region is as follows:

	Numbers
Northern	414
Yorkshire and Humberside	614
North West	310
East Midlands	341
West Midlands	827
East Anglia	1,163
South East	5,079
South West	1,151
Scotland	198
Wales	350

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Allen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the cost per capita per person in the United Kingdom *(a)* of the common agricultural policy and *(b)* of the annual farm price increases, for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Curry: Public expenditure on common agricultural policy measures in the United Kingdom in each of the last 10 years has been as follows:

Financial year	*Total expenditure (£ million)*	*Estimated total United Kingdom resident population (million)*[1]	*Expenditure per head (£)*
1980-81	876	56·3	16
1981-82	877	56·4	16
1982-83	1,338	56·3	24
1983-84	1,618	56·4	29
1984-85	1,620	56·5	29
1985-86	2,066	56·6	37
1986-87	1,396	56·8	25
1987-88	1,610	56·9	28
1988-89	1,362	57·1	24
1989-90	[2]1,222	n/a	n/a

[1] Mid-calendar-year population estimates falling within the relevant financial year (source—Office of Population Censuses and Surveys).
[2] Forecast

The full cost of each annual farm price settlement cannot readily be calculated, as decisions in one year will have effects in each succeeding year.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has sought concerning the incidence of spongiform encephalopathy in the United Kingdom among *(a)* feral mink and *(b)* farm-bred mink.

Mr. Maclean: Transmissible mink encephalopathy has not been recorded in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many post-mortem tests for BSE his Department has conducted on cattle born since 8 August 1988.

Mr. Maclean: Four cattle born since 8 August 1988 have been subject to post mortem histopathology for BSE. Of those, three were negative and one result is pending.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the infective agent responsible for bovine spongiform encephalopathy has been found in bovine muscle tissue.

Mr. Maclean: Research into the presence of the BSE agent in bovine tissues has not so far found any agent in bovine muscle tissue. Research into sheep scrapie indicates that the agent would not be found in muscle.

Professor Richard Lacey

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the library of his Department has any non-scientific or learned publications which contain contributions produced by Professor Lacey during the previous *(a)* year, *(b)* five years and *(c)* 10 years.

Mr. Curry: The following is a list of publications with contributions from Professor Lacey and held in the MAFF Library. All items were produced within the last year.

The Independent
Free speech 2: The nation's health and the sunday roast: the only logical way to avoid the risk is to change our diet.
24 March 1990.

The Guardian
Environment: Milk of unkindness—Professor Richard Lacey has been given clearance under the Official Secrets Act to argue why BST milk should be banned.
6 October 1989.

Safe Shopping, Safe Cooking, Safe Eating
Penguin, 1989.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the library of his Department has copies of any learned scientific papers which have been published by Professor Lacey in the previous *(a)* year, *(b)* five years and *(c)* 10 years; and in what scientific journals they appear.

Mr. Curry: The following is a list of journals with contributions from Professor Lacey, which are held in the MAFF Library.

(a) Published within the last year:

Applied and Environmental Microbiology
Evaluation of the mast ID and API 50CH systems for the identification of listeria-SPP.
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Vol. 14, No. 1, February 1981. pp 41-9.
Do sulphonamide-trimethoprim combinations select less resistance to trimethoprin than the use of trimethoprim alone?
Vol. 15, No. 4, November 1982. pp 403-27.

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1 (8159), January 12th 1980. p 101.
Comparison of trimethoprim alone with trimethoprin sulphamethoxazole in the treatment of respiratory and urinary infections with particular reference to selection of trimethoprim resistance.
1 (8181), June 14th 1980. pp 1270-3.
Trimethoprim alone (letter)
2 (8188), August 2nd 1980. pp 256-7.
New type of beta-lactam resistance in staphylococcus aureus (letter).
With Lord V. L.
1 (8228) May 9 1981. pp 1049-50.
Double-blind study to compare the selection of antibiotic resistance by amoxycillin or cephradine in the commensal flora.
With Lord, V. L.; Howson, G.L.; Luxton, D. E.; Trotter, I. S.
2 (8349) September 3 1983. pp 529-32.

Possible selection of beta-lactamase-producing staphylococcus aureus by lysozyme (letter).
With Millar, M.
2 (8409) October 27 1984. p 987.
Evolution of microorganisms and antibiotic resistance.
2 (8410) November 3 1984. pp 1022-5.

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Evaluation of the measurement of reverse T3 in suspected thyroid disease.
With Dalton, A.; Standing, S.
Vol. 40. No. 3 July 1983. pp 235-42.
Todays antibiotics—the way ahead.
Vol. 41, No. 2. April 1984. pp 173-8.

Nature
Pathology. What origin for toxic shock syndrome? (news).
305 (5936) October 20-26 1983. pp 667-8.

Veterinary Record
Does the use of chloramphenicol in animals jeopardise the treatment of human infections.
Vol. 114, No. 1. January 7 1984. pp 6-8.

Dichlorvos

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish the advice given to him by the veterinary products advisory committee about the pesticide dichlorvos.

Mr. Maclean: No, because veterinary products committee advice is directed to the licensing authority and is usually in the form of recommendations on licence applications for specific products, taking into account the circumstances of their use.

Dredge Spoil

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the dumping of dredge spoil is controlled under the terms of the North sea conference agreements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Yes.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what controls exist in respect of disposal of dredge spoil; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The disposal of dredged spoil at sea is controlled by a requirement for licensing under part II of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list those locations where dredge spoil was dumped last year, giving the quantities for each site; and what checks are carried out to establish impact on the marine environment in respect of choice of location, quantity of dredge spoil and contamination levels of dredge spoil, before such dumping is carried out.

Mr. Curry: About 110 locations in English and Welsh waters have been designated for the disposal of dredged material. The sites are identified in annual reports of the Oslo Commission, copies of which are in the Library of the House. Statistics of quantities disposed of at each site in 1989 are not yet available.

The assessment of dredged material for disposal at sea is carried out in accordance with guidelines agreed by the Oslo Commission in 1986.

The guidelines provide a means of assessing dredged material which it is proposed to deposit at sea, including information on the nature, quantity and composition of the material. They also include the factors which are to be considered in the designation of dredged material disposal areas. These factors include:

1. Geographical position, depth and distance from the coast;
2. Location in relation to living resources in adult or juvenile phases;
3. Location in relation to amenity areas;
4. Initial dilution achieved by proposed method of discharge;
5. Dispersal, horizontal transport and vertical mixing characteristics;
6. Existence and effects of current and previous discharges and dumping in the area (including accumulative effects).

Guidelines for post-operational monitoring of dredged material disposal sites were adopted by the Oslo Commission in 1980 and form the basis of our current site surveillance strategy.

Sheep Prices

Mr. Amos: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to implement the award agreed at the recent price fixing for the sheep sector to take effect immediately; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The new green rates for sheep, which will increase the sterling value of the support price by 11 per cent., will come into effect at the beginning of the 1991 marketing year. This is in line with usual practice and any amendment to the implementation date would have to be proposed by the Commission and agreed by the Council.

Public Appointments

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the full-time and part-time public appointments for which he is responsible, together with the salary and the date when each appointment is due for renewal.

Mr. Curry: The main appointments, for which I am responsible, with details of remuneration are set out in "Public Bodies 1989", a copy of which is in the Library of the House. All appointments are part time.

The next dates for appointment or renewal are set out below. The dates of other appointments or renewals cannot be provided without disproportionate cost.

Name of body	*Date of next appointment or renewal*	*Position*
Agricultural Training Board	March 1992	Whole committee
Agricultural Wages Board	July 1990	Chairman + 2 independent members
	July 1991	2 independent members
Agricultural Wages Committees (England)	1990	1 Chairman + 21 members

Name of body	Date of next appointment or renewal	Position
Apple and Pear Research Council (formerly Apple and Pear Development Council)	December 1992	Chairman + 8 members
Food from Britain	May 1990	Chairman
	September 1990	2 Members
	September 1992	Deputy Chairman + 11 members
Home Grown Cereals Authority	June 1990	6 members
	June 1991	Deputy Chairman + 6 members
	June 1992	Chairman + 7 members
Horticultural Development Council	July 1990	7 members
	July 1991	6 members
	July 1992	Chairman, Deputy Chairman + 7 members
Meat and Livestock Commission	August 1990	Chairman
	January 1992	Deputy Chairman
	March 1992	Chairman of Consumers Committee + 5 members
	September 1992	5 members
Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew	June 1990	1 member
	October 1991	Chairman + 5 members
	April 1992	1 member
	October 1992	3 members
	October 1993	1 member
Sea Fish Industry Authority	September 1990	Whole committee
The Wine Standards Board of the Vintners Company	April 1992	Whole committee
Advisory Committee on Pesticides	December 1990	Chairman + 8 members
	December 1992	Deputy Chairman + 1 member
Agricultural Dwelling House Advisory Committee	Convened on an Ad Hoc basis	
Regional Panels for the Farming Industry	Various dates between August 1990 and August 1992 depending on Committee	
Salmon Advisory Committee	February 1992	8 members
	November 1992	Chairman
	February 1993	9 members
Steering Group on Food Surveillance	March 1991	Reviewed on a yearly basis
Sugar Beet Research and Education Committee	July 1990	1 member
	June 1991	2 members
	September 1991	Chairman and 1 member
	June 1992	3 members
Veterinary Products Committee	December 1991	Chairman + 6 members
	December 1993	9 members
Agricultural Land Tribunals	All appointments made by Lord Chancellor	
Dairy Product Quota Tribunal	No fixed term of office	
Milk and Dairies Tribunals	1991 to 1992 depending on region	5 Chairmen
Plant Varieties and Seeds Tribunal	April 1990	1 member
	September 1990	8 members
	October 1990	1 member
	March 1991	14 members
	April 1991	3 members
	January 1992	1 member
	June 1992	1 member
	August 1992	2 members
	September 1992	2 members
Covent Garden Market Authority	June 1991	1 member
	July 1991	1 member
	December 1991	Chairman
	January 1992	1 member
	August 1992	1 member
	January 1993	1 member
Agricultural Statistics Consultative Committee	Under consideration (expired 1998)	
Area VII White Fish Industry Advisory Committee	December 1992	Whole committee

Name of body	*Date of next appointment or renewal*	*Position*
Committee on Agricultural Valuation	March 1993	Whole committee
Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (formerly Consultative Committee on Research into Spongiform Encephalopathies)	No fixed term	
Consultative Panel on Badgers and Tuberculosis	January 1993	Whole committee
Consumers Committee for England and Wales under the Agricultural Marketing Act 1958	November 1990	1 member
	January 1991	1 member
	February 1991	3 members
	September 1991	Chairman
	May 1992	1 member
	December 1992	1 member
Consumers Committee for Great Britain under the Agricultural Marketing Act 1958	November 1990	1 member
	January 1991	1 member
	February 1991	3 members
	August 1991	1 member
	September 1991	Chairman
	May 1992	1 member
	December 1992	1 member
Experimental Centres Advisory Committees in England and Wales	Various dates between 1990 and 1992 depending on committee	
Farm Animal Welfare Council	December 1990	5 members
	May 1991	Chairman
	June 1991	1 member
	September 1991	2 members
	October 1991	4 members
	November 1991	1 member
	December 1991	5 members
	January 1992	1 member
	December 1992	3 members
Food Advisory Committee	October 1991	Chairman + 6 members
	October 1992	8 members
Hill Farming Advisory Committee for England, Wales and Northern Ireland	February 1992	Whole committee
National Food Survey Committee	September 1990	1 member
	July 1991	2 members
	August 1991	1 member
	October 1991	1 member
Priorities Board for Research and Development in Agriculture and Food	June 1990	4 members
	October 1990	Chairman + 5 members
	November 1990	1 member
	March 1992	1 member

SCOTLAND

Fish Industries

113. **Mr. Buchanan-Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met representatives of the Scottish fishing, fish processing and fish merchandising industries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The Government place considerable importance on maintaining close contact with representatives of the industry in Scotland. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and my noble Friend the Minister of State last met representatives of the Scottish Fishermen's Federation on 8 May. My noble Friend the Minister of State has regular contact with all sectors of the industry. He met representatives of the Scottish Fish Merchants Federation on 12 February and a further meeting has been arranged for 6 June.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average amount of Government grant and contribution from business rates which is made in respect of each community charge payer in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The average amount for 1990-91 is £1,031.

Housing Associations

Mr. Michael J. Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place a list of the names of the directors of the Thenew housing association in the Library.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held by the Scottish Development Department. Under

section 4 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1988, Scottish Homes has the responsibility for maintaining a register of housing associations and overseeing their constitution.

This register is available for inspection at Scottish Homes head office during normal office hours.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what projects the Thenew housing association is involved in the Possilpark area.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not held by the Scottish Development Department.

Approval of individual housing association developments is a matter entirely for Scottish Homes.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with housing associations funded by Scottish Homes on their policies on consulting local residents where they embark on new projects in an area.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: None. Detailed consideration of individual housing associations proposals is a matter entirely for Scottish Homes taking account of its own policies and programme, and in the context of local housing need.

Civic Government (Scotland) Act

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what requests he has received to introduce an appeal procedure under section 49(2) of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It has been brought to our attention that section 49(2) of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 makes no specific provision for an appeal. This will be one of the points addressed in the review of the 1982 Act which we are currently undertaking.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to publish proposals for changes to the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A consultation paper will be issued this year.

Skye Bridge

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from the National Trust for Scotland concerning the proposed line of route and causeway design component of a bridge to Skye with particular reference to *(a)* the impact of this upon the National Trust for Scotland-owned Eilean Dhubh, *(b)* the alignment from the Plock of Kyle to Eilean Dhubh and *(c)* the desirability or feasibility of a viaduct construction in preference to a causeway; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: As part of the consultation now in hand with various parties, the National Trust for Scotland wrote to the Scottish Development Department in a letter received on 18 May with its views. The comments of the trust are detailed and its views have not yet been assessed. The general view of the trust is that it wishes to see environmental and aesthetic standards appropriate to the project and its landscape setting, a view shared by all involved in the project.

The next step will be for designers and landscape architects to take account of the various views expressed and prepare scale models of developed proposals for presentation to those concerned.

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will assess the cost implications of the construction of the proposed bridge to Skye of a viaduct design in preference to the inclusion of a causeway; if he will indicate what impact such a design change might have upon possible toll charges to be levied; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Consultation is now in hand with the relevant parties about the various aspects of the proposed bridge to Skye. These include its environmental treatment and the views of conservation and amenity groups such as the National Trust for Scotland, the Royal Fine Art Commission for Scotland and the Countryside Commission for Scotland are being sought. When all these views on general treatment are to hand it will be possible for designers and landscape architects to work up proposals, costings and environmental solutions for detailed discussion. It would be premature to speculate on the likely level of tolls until a complete project has been satisfactorily defined.

National Trust for Scotland

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what legislative procedures would be involved in a Government Department seeking to remove a specific piece of land from the ownership of the National Trust for Scotland; if such a procedure has been invoked before; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: If the National Trust for Scotland objects to any party seeking to compulsorily acquire land held in alienably by the National Trust for Scotland, the matter is dealt with through special parliamentary procedures. My right hon. and learned Friend would direct an inquiry to be held under the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936.

Commisioners appointed under the Act would hold the inquiry at such places as they would determine, hear the various parties and issue their recommendations. If my right hon. and learned Friend is not prepared to accept their recommendations, he can present a Bill for confirmation of the order to Parliament and section 9 of the 1936 Act would apply to such a Bill.

There is no record of this procedure having been used in relation to the National Trust for Scotland.

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to seek legislative means to remove the island of Eilean Dhub from the ownership of the National Trust for Scotland Balmacara estate; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to remove the island of Eilean Dhubh from the ownership of the National Trust for Scotland Balmacara estate.

Primary School, Oban

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what request he has received for funding for a new primary school in Oban; and what response he has made.

Mr. Lang: Funding for educational building projects is the responsibility of individual authorities, operating

within limits on their overall levels of capital expenditure set by my right hon. and learned Friend. Account has been taken of proposals in Strathclyde regional council's financial plans for primary school provision in Oban in determining provisional limits for the council's capital expenditure in 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Dounreay

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what account he took of public opinion before giving permission for a test borehole at Dounreay; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Before reaching his decision to sustain the appeal lodged by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority against Highland regional council's decision to refuse planning permission for the drilling of two test boreholes at Dounreay, my right hon. and learned Friend gave careful consideration to all representations made including those from individual members of the public and those from organisations representing a wide range of public interests.

Seals

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to require fish farming operations to introduce measures to keep seals away which eliminate the need to employ marksmen to kill them.

Mr. Lang: In February this year the Scottish Salmon Growers Association published a code of practice on salmon farming and predatory wildlife. This document was developed in collaboration with various wildlife conservation interests, including the Nature Conservancy Council. It lays down the general policy that shooting or other methods of destructive control must only be considered as a last resort. In relation to seals, the code of practice emphasises that the killing of a particular animal may be considered only after reasonable measures have been taken to exclude seals from salmon farms.

My right hon. and learned Friend welcomes the adoption of the code of practice and the emphasis on non-destructive measures with shooting only as a last resort to prevent damage.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many seals he estimates were killed legitimately last year under the terms of the Seals Act 1970; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: No such estimate is available. In 1989 no licences were issued to shoot seals of either species under the provisions in section 10 of the 1970 Act. There is no central record or requirement to report seals which may have been killed in other circumstances.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy in respect of the establishment of fish farms adjacent to known seal colonies; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Proximity to areas of wildlife interests is one of the factors taken into account in the consultation procedures which the Crown Estates Commissioners undertake when considering a sea bed lease for the purposes of marine fish farming. The Crown Estates guidelines on siting procedures and principles, and on siting and design of marine fish farms in Scotland emphasise that important wildlife areas should be avoided. Nature conservation and other interests are given the opportunity to comment on applications for marine fish farm leases under the procedures agreed with my right hon. and learned Friend.

Local Authority Budgets

Mr. Younger: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Ayr of 1 February, *Official Report*, column *213*, he is now able to make a statement about local authorities' budgets for 1990-91.

Mr. Rifkind: Details of local authorities' budgets for 1990-91 compared with those for 1989-90 are set out in the table.

Based on adjusted budget returns, it is now clear that authorities are planning an average increase of 8·9 per cent. in their expenditure for 1990-91 over the corresponding figure for last year. This is a noticeable reduction over the previous year's actual increase of 12·3 per cent., and I have already expressed some satisfaction that there are some signs that accountability is beginning to work through. There are, however, no grounds for complacency as too many authorities are still budgeting for growth in their expenditure, leading to higher than necessary community charges. It is for individual authorities to justify those increases to their local electorates.

	Budget Estimate 1989-90 £000	*Budget Estimate 1990-91 £000*	*Percentage increase*
Borders	71,169	76,979	8·2
Central	174,297	194,142	11·4
Dumfries and Galloway	98,292	107,068	8·9
Fife	232,235	259,686	11·8
Grampian	308,204	333,956	8·4
Highland	154,670	176,434	13·9
Lothian	482,368	547,306	13·6
Strathclyde	1,690,456	1,780,005	5·3
Tayside	266,540	289,441	8·6
Regions	3,478,431	3,765,521	8·3
Orkney	18,588	19,184	3·2
Shetland	23,714	35,743	50·7
Western Isles	33,384	37,928	13·6
Islands	75,686	92,855	22·7
Berwickshire	1,215	1,465	20·6
Ettrick and Lauderdale	2,426	2,612	7·7
Roxburgh	2,686	3,034	13·0
Tweeddale	1,044	1,144	9·6
Clackmannan	5,992	6,791	13·3
Falkirk	11,912	12,115	1·7
Stirling	10,173	11,983	17·8
Annandale and Eskdale	2,749	3,132	13·9
Nithsdale	4,445	5,110	15·0
Stewartry	1,724	2,073	20·2
Wigtown	2,291	2,755	20·3
Dunfermline	12,631	14,705	14·6
Kirkcaldy	15,303	16,465	7·6
North East Fife	5,844	7,175	22·8
Aberdeen	24,950	28,296	13·4
Banff and Buchan	7,179	7,927	10·4
Gordon	5,212	7,831	50·2
Kincardine and Deeside	3,194	3,663	14·7
Moray	6,559	7,129	8·7
Badenoch and Strathspey	773	909	17·6

	Budget Estimate 1988-90 £000	Budget Estimate 1990-91 £000	Percentage increase
Caithness	1,953	2,082	6·6
Inverness	4,408	4,677	6·1
Lochaber	1,597	1,758	10·1
Nairn	765	891	16·5
Ross and Cromarty	4,170	4,565	9·5
Skye and Lochalsh	881	1,087	23·4
Sutherland	1,194	1,474	23·5
East Lothian	8,600	9,047	5·2
Edinburgh	53,127	60,191	13·3
Midlothian	8,284	9,016	8·8
West Lothian	12,888	13,788	7·0
Argyll and Bute	7,673	8,275	7·8
Bearsden and Milngavie	3,650	4,041	10·7
Clydebank	6,229	5,603	−10·0
Clydesdale	6,506	7,208	10·8
Cumbernauld	5,875	6,527	11·1
Cumnock	4,370	4,874	11·5
Cunninghame	14,685	16,415	11·8
Dumbarton	8,405	9,662	15·0
East Kilbride	8,734	10,168	16·4
Eastwood	4,603	5,028	9·2
Glasgow	136,736	148,060	8·3
Hamilton	10,028	11,418	13·9
Inverclyde	9,684	10,958	13·2
Kilmarnock	7,752	8,432	8·8
Kyle and Carrick	12,574	14,104	12·2
Monklands	11,705	12,991	11·0
Motherwell	14,527	16,320	12·3
Renfrew	24,019	26,459	10·2
Strathkelvin	8,459	10,012	18·2
Angus	8,581	9,533	11·1
Dundee	19,931	22,231	11·5
Perth and Kinross	10,600	12,521	15·9
Districts	571,905	635,740	11·2
Scotland	4,126,022	4,494,116	8·9

Note: Figures are total relevant expenditure excluding loan and leasing charges and CFCR.

Local Councillors

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he still intends to introduce regulations on councillors' allowances on 1 July 1990; and when he proposes to consult on regulations in respect of voting rights and political balance on local authority committees.

Mr. Rifkind: My final proposals for councillors' allowances in Scotland were sent to the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) last week. I have decided to defer introduction of the new scheme until 1 August 1990 to allow more time for authorities to make the necessary arrangements.

As regards the proposed regulations on voting rights and political balance on committees, I shall be consulting COSLA on these shortly and shall reach a final decision on an implementation date in the light of their response.

Fisheries Protection Services

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the future organisation of the Scottish fisheries protection services.

Mr. Rifkind: I have decided that the Scottish fisheries protection services should become a candidate for executive agency status within the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland under the "next steps" initiative.

Rural Library Service

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will meet local authority representatives to discuss ways of improving the library service in rural areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 22 May 1990]:* Statutory responsibility for the local authority public library service in Scotland lies with the local authorities themselves and not with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. I have had no request from local authority representatives for a meeting on rural library services and I do not think that such a meeting would serve any useful purpose at present. I am, nevertheless, aware of the recent report on public library provision in rural Scotland. My officials met representatives of the sponsors of the report to discuss the issues involved and I have undertaken to consider the proposal of a rural library incentive scheme in due course in light of an evaluation of a comparable scheme presently in operation in England.

EMPLOYMENT

Youth Training

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish details for Great Britain and for the west midlands region, for each year from April 1986 to the most recent date, of the total number of *(a)* three-month extensions granted to YTS trainees with disabilities, *(b)* six-month extensions granted to YTS trainees with disabilities, *(c)* initial training places taken up by YTS trainees with disabilities, *(d)* adaptions to premises and equipment grants applied for by youth training schemes, *(e)* adaptions to premises and equipment grants granted to youth training schemes, *(f)* successful applications to the special aids to employment scheme granted to youth training schemes, *(g)* personal reader services for the blind provided to trainees on youth training schemes, *(h)* communication services for the deaf provided to trainees on youth training schemes and *(i)* residential training awards provided to trainees on youth training schemes.

Mr. Nicholls: This information can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) from the 1989 labour force survey, by standard region including Greater London, and for Great Britain as a whole, by male, female and total how many people who were not unemployed by the definition using International Labour Organisation/Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development guidelines on the grounds that they had not actively looked for work in the four weeks prior to interview and were not available to start work within two weeks, but who stated that they would like a job if one was available, expressed a preference for *(a)* full-time work, *(b)* part-time work, or *(c)* expressed no preference;

(2) from the 1989 labour force survey, by standard region including Greater London, and for Great Britain as a whole, by male, female and total how many people who were not unemployed by the definition using International Labour Organisation/Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development guidelines on the grounds

that they were not available to start work within two weeks, but had actively looked for work in the four weeks prior to interview and stated that they would like a job if one was available, expressed a preference for *(a)* full-time work, *(b)* part-time work, or *(c)* expressed no preference;

(3) from labour force survey data for each spring from 1984 to 1989, by male, female and total, how many people who were not counted as unemployed by the definition using International Labour Organisation/Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development guidelines on the grounds that they had not looked for work in the four weeks prior to interview and were not free to start work within two weeks, but stated that they would like a job if one was available, expressed a preference for *(a)* work as an employee, *(b)* work as self-employed, or *(c)* expressed no preference;

(4) from labour force survey data for each spring from 1984 to 1989, by male, female and total, how many people who were not counted as unemployed by the definition using International Labour Organisation/Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development guidelines on the grounds that they were not available to start work within two weeks, but had actively sought work within the four weeks prior to interview, and stated that they would like a job if one was available, expressed a preference for *(a)* full-time work, *(b)* part-time work, or *(c)* expressed no preference;

(5) from labour force survey data for the years 1984 to 1989, by male, female and total, how many people in Great Britain claiming benefit as unemployed who were not counted as unemployed by the definition using ILO/OECD guidelines on the grounds that they were not free to start work within two weeks, had looked for work in the four weeks prior to interview, and stated that they would like a job if one were available, were in each of the categories *(a)* students, *(b)* long-term sick or disabled, *(c)* looking after family/home, *(d)* retired from paid work, *(e)* believes no jobs available and *(f)* any other reason;

(6) from the 1989 labour force survey, by standard region including Greater London, and for Great Britain as a whole, by male, female and total, how many people who were not unemployed by the definition using International Labour Organisation/Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development guidelines on the grounds that they had not actively looked for work in the four weeks prior to interview, but who stated that they would like a job if one was available, and were available to start work within two weeks, expressed a preference for *(a)* full-time work, *(b)* part-time work, or *(c)* expressed no preference;

(7) from labour force survey data for each spring from 1984 to 1989, by male, female and total, how many people who were not counted as unemployed by the definition using ILO/OECD guidelines on the grounds that they had not looked for work in the four weeks prior to interview, but stated that they would like a job if one was available, and were free to start work within two weeks, expressed a preference for *(a)* full-time work, *(b)* part-time work, or *(c)* no preference;

(8) from labour force survey data for the years 1984 to 1989, by male, female and total, how many people in Great Britain who were not counted as unemployed by the definition using ILO/OECD guidelines on the grounds that they had not looked for work in the four weeks prior to interview and were free to start work within two weeks, and stated that they would like a job if one was available, were in each of the categories *(a)* students, *(b)* long-term sick or disabled, *(c)* looking after family/home, *(d)* retired from paid work, *(e)* believes no jobs available and *(f)* any other reason;

(9) from labour force survey data for each spring from 1984 to 1989, by male, female and total, how many people counted as unemployed by the definition using International Labour Organisation/Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development guidelines expressed a preference for *(a)* full-time work, *(b)* part-time work, or *(c)* expressed no preferences;

(10) from labour force survey data for the years 1984 to 1989, by male, female and total, how many people in Great Britain claiming benefit as unemployed who were not counted as unemployed by the definition using ILO/OECD guidelines on the grounds that they had not looked for work in the four weeks prior to interview and were not free to start work within two weeks, stated that they would like a job if one was available and were in each of the categories: *(a)* students, *(b)* long-term sick or disabled, *(c)* looking after family/home, *(d)* retired from paid work, *(e)* believes no jobs available and *(f)* any other reason;

(11) from the 1989 labour force survey, by standard region including Greater London, and for Great Britain as a whole, by male, female and totals how many people were unemployed according to International Labour Organisation/Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development definitions and wanting *(a)* full-time work, *(b)* part-time work and *(c)* expressed no preference;

(12) from labour force survey data for each Spring from 1984 to 1989, by male, female and total, how many people were not counted as unemployed by the definition using International Labour Organisation/Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development guidelines on the grounds that they had not looked for work in the four weeks prior to interview and were not free to start work within two weeks, but stated that they would like a job if one was available, expressed a preference for *(a)* full-time work, *(b)* part-time work, or *(c)* expressed no preference;

(13) from labour force survey data for the years 1984 to 1989, by male, female and total, how many people in Great Britain were not counted as unemployed by the definition using ILO/OECD guidelines on the grounds that they had not looked for work in the four weeks prior to interview and were not free to start work within two weeks, stated that they would like a job if one was available and were in each of the categories: *(a)* students, *(b)* long-term sick or disabled, *(c)* looking after family/home, *(d)* retired from paid work, *(e)* believes no jobs available and *(f)* any other reason;

(14) from the 1989 labour force survey, by standard region including Greater London, and for Great Britain by male, female and total, how many people unemployed according to International Labour Organisation/Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development definitions wanted full-time work, part-time work, or expressed no preference;

(15) from labour force survey data for each spring from 1984 to 1989, by male, female and total, how many people were not counted as unemployed by the definition using ILO/OECD guidelines on the grounds that they had not looked for work in the four weeks prior to interview, but stated that they would like a job if one was available, and

were free to start work within two weeks, expressed a preference for *(a)* work as an employee, *(b)* work as self-employed, or *(c)* expressed no preference;

(16) from labour force survey data for the years 1984 to 1989, for each standard region including Greater London, and for Great Britain by male, female and total, how many people were not counted as unemployed according to ILO/OECD guidelines on the grounds that they were not free to start work within two weeks, had actively looked for work in the four weeks prior to interview, and stated they would like a job if one was available;

(17) from labour force survey data for the years 1984 to 1989, by male, female and total, how many people in Great Britain who were not counted as unemployed by the definition using ILO/OECD guidelines on the grounds that they were not free to start work within two weeks, had looked for work in the four weeks prior to interview, and stated that they would like a job if one was available, were in each of the categories: *(a)* students, *(b)* long-term sick or disabled, *(c)* looking after family/home, *(d)* retired from paid work, *(e)* believes no jobs available and *(f)* any other reason;

(18) from labour force survey data for each spring from 1984 to 1989, by male, female and total, how many people were not counted as unemployed by the definition using International Labour Organisation/Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development guidelines on the grounds that they were not available to start work within two weeks, had actively sought work within the four weeks prior to interview, stated that they would like a job if one was available, and expressed a preference for *(a)* work as an employee, *(b)* work as self-employed, or *(c)* expressed no preference;

(19) from labour force survey data for the years 1984 to 1989, by male, female and total, how many people in Great Britain claiming benefit as unemployed who were not counted as unemployed by the definition using ILO/OECD guidelines on the grounds that they had not looked for work in the four weeks prior to interview, were free to start work within two weeks and stated that they would like a job if one was available, were in each of the categories: *(a)* students, *(b)* long-term sick or disabled, *(c)* looking after family/home, *(d)* retired from paid work, *(e)* believes no jobs available and *(f)* any other reason.

Mr. Nicholls: Estimates from labour force surveys as requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if training and enterprise councils will be required to offer employment training trainees the same training bonuses as are now available to those who successfully complete their action plans and/or obtain vocational qualifications; how much the Government will continue to pay directly towards the training bonuses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: Training and enterprise councils (TECs) have discretion over the arrangements for training bonuses on employment training. Where a TEC takes over responsibility for the training programme of a trainee already on employment training, the TEC must continue to offer terms and conditions no less favourable than those previously enjoyed by that trainee. Resources for training bonuses are included in TEC budgets.

Apprentices

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list by trade the number of apprentices taken on by British industry for each year since 1979.

Mr. Nicholls: The information is not available.

Low Pay

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the proportion of female part-time workers, and female and male full-time workers in *(a)* Great Britain, *(b)* the South West and *(c)* Avon, whose hourly earnings, exclusive of overtime, fell below (i) £3·10, (ii) £3·85, (iii) £4·16 and (iv) £4·32 in April 1989.

Mr. Nicholls: The available information is given in the table.

Per cent.

	Hourly earnings less than:				
	£3·00	*£3·20*	*£3·80*	*£4·00*	*£4·50*
Full-time males					
Avon	6	9	18	21	31
South West	8	12	24	28	39
Great Britain	7	10	21	24	35
Full-time females					
Avon	14	21	39	46	59
South West	21	28	46	52	64
Great Britain	19	25	40	46	57
Part-time females					
Avon	48	57	74	78	86
South West	53	61	77	80	86
Great Britain	48	57	73	77	83

Hourly earnings excluding overtime, pay not affected by absence.

Employment Training

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employment training trainees are receiving *(a)* income support and the £10 training premium, *(b)* unemployment benefit and the £10 training premium or *(c)* only the £10 training premium; and if he has any plans to increase the value of the £10 premium in line with increases in the costs associated with taking up a training place.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not available. There are no plans to increase the £10 premium part of employment training trainee allowances.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment for each region, for Great Britain, how many employment training trainees are receiving child care allowances.

Mr. Nicholls: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish) on 13 February 1990, *Official Report*, columns *204-5*, which is the latest information available.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give for each region, and for Great

Britain for each month since July 1989, the number of *(a)* entrants to employment training, *(b)* people receiving employment training training allowances, *(c)* employment training special group starts, separately for skill shortage and labour market returners and single parents, *(d)* employment training leavers and *(e)* employment training leavers who left before completing their action plan.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many of the people undertaking employment training in each of the London area offices are receiving child care payments.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not available.

Wages Councils

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the figures for the spending by his Department on *(a)* newspaper advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* television advertising and *(d)* all other promotional material, relating to wages councils under the Wages Act 1986 (i) since 1979 and (ii) in each respective year; what is his estimate for the current year; and what is the budget for 1990-91.

Mr. Nicholls: The Department does not use newspaper, radio or television advertising in relation to wages council matters, although notice of wages council orders and proposals is published in the London and Edinburgh *Gazettes*.

Notices giving details of minimum rates are distributed to all establishments where workers covered by the councils concerned are known to be employed.

Public Appointments

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the full-time and part-time public appointments for which he is responsible, together with the salary and the date when each appointment is due for renewal.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend is responsible for some 4,000 appointments to a range of executive, advisory, tribunals and other public bodies. The information requested is not readily available and could not be assembled without disproportionate cost. Public bodies sponsored by this Department are listed in the Cabinet Office publication "Public Bodies 1989" available in the House of Commons Library.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many staff are employed by his Department; and what proportion of them are employed in each of the standard regions.

Mr. Eggar: The attached table details permanent staff in post within the Employment Department group and shows a breakdown of the proportion of staff employed within each of the standard regions.

Permanent staff in post figures by standard region for Employment Department Group as at 1 April 1990

Standard Region	*Staff in post*
Scotland	5,885
North West	11,575
Northern	3,737
Yorkshire and Humberside	7,497
Wales	3,306
Midlands	8,484
London and South East	12,895
South West	3,561
Total	56,940

Note: Figures on head count basis.

Action for Jobs

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much of the total expenditure on the action for jobs campaign in 1985-86 was spent on *(a)* press advertising and *(b)* radio advertising.

Mr. Eggar: A total of £34,000 was spent on press advertising on the action for jobs campaign in 1985-86 and £6,000 on radio advertising.

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the main headings of expenditure on action for jobs in addition to expenditure on television advertising and printed material in 1988-89.

Mr. Eggar: The main headings of expenditure on action for jobs in 1988-89, in addition to television advertising and printed material, were press, radio and outdoor advertising.

Part-time Work

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish the latest available data on the number and percentage of part-time jobs that pay less than the national insurance threshold.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have been asked to reply.

The latest available data on part-time employment indicate that in 1989 there were on average some 5·3 million part-time employees in Great Britain. It is estimated that about 2·5 million (47 per cent.) of those earned below the lower earnings limit for national insurance.

DEFENCE

Radiation Monitoring

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide information on the number of personnel employed by his Department, including the Health and Safety Executive, on the inspection, maintenance and improvement of standards of radiation monitoring, by United Kingdom region, for *(a)* Ministry of Defence workers' exposure and *(b)* civilian workers' exposure.

Mr. Nicholls: The information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Military Aircraft (Statistics)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, (1) pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey of 3 May, *Official Report*, columns *647-48*, how many aeroplane flights in which radioactive material was being carried have resulted in *(a)* crashes and *(b)* near-misses which did not constitute a serious risk of release of radiation or radioactive material;

(2) whether the answer to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey of 3 May, *Official Report*, column *648*, about transport of defence nuclear materials includes aircraft operated by United States personnel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to the reply that I gave on 3 May.

Military Bands

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will publish a table showing the cost of *(a)* the Royal Marines and *(b)* the Royal Air Force bands in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Full details of all the costs of maintaining Royal Marines and Royal Air Force bands are not held centrally and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost and effort. The tables show those costs which can be estimated from information held centrally.

The estimated Royal Marines costs, which cover pay, ERNIC, pensions and gratuities and other personnel costs (including travel and subsistence) are as follows:

Year	*£ million*
1980-81	5·2
1981-82	5·3
1982-83	5·4
1983-84	5·6
1984-85	6·0
1985-86	6·4
1986-87	7·0
1987-88	6·9
1988-89	7·2
1989-90	7·5

The estimated costs for the RAF are as follows:

(£100Ks)

Year	*Service pay*	*Civilian pay*[1]	*Band grants*[2]
1980-81	18·5	—	—
1981-82	20·4	—	—
1982-83	21·6	—	—
1983-84	23·1	—	0·2
1984-85	24·4	—	0·5
1985-86	26·7	—	0·3
1986-87	28·8	—	0·4
1987-88	30·6	—	0·4
1988-89	32·6	1·6	0·4
1989-90	34·9	1·7	0·5

[1] Information for years prior to 1988-89 is not held centrally.
[2] Information for years prior to 1983-84 is not held centrally.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many public performances by Royal Marines and Royal Air Force bands last year were in *(a)* England, Wales and Scotland, *(b)* Northern Ireland and *(c)* elsewhere.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Records are not held centrally in the form requested and the information could not be provided without disproportionate cost.

Low Flying

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will bring about the immediate ending of low flying by Royal Air Force and foreign aircraft over the east midlands.

Mr. Neubert: No.

Public Appointments

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the full-time and part-time public appointments for which he is responsible together with the salary and the date when each appointment is due for renewal.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer the hon. Member to "Public Bodies 1989" issued by the office of the Minister for the Civil Service in December 1989; pages 9 and 10 list MOD appointments.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many staff are employed by his Department; and what proportion of them are employed in each of the standard regions.

Mr. Alan Clark: At 1 April 1990 there were 141,372·5 United Kingdom-based civilian staff employed by the Ministry of Defence. The proportional breakdown between regions in the United Kingdom was:

	Per cent.
South East	27·8
Northern	2·2
Yorkshire and Humberside	4·2
London	13·2
Northern Ireland	1·9
East Midlands	2·4
West Midlands	6·3
South West	21·5
North West	2·1
Wales	3·9
Scotland	8·7
East Anglia	1·8

The balance of 4 per cent. were overseas, including those at sea or in the Royal Fleet Auxiliary.

Anglo-French Military Co-operation

Mr. Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the present extent of Anglo-French military co-operation.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Anglo-French military co-operation is extensive, with a wide range of contacts and exchanges at all levels between all three branches of the armed forces, in addition to a number of joint exercises. There is also co-operation in the fields of equipment procurement and research. During the Anglo-French summit in London on 4 May, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and the French Defence Minister, Mr. Chevenement, discussed ways in which this co-operation could be extended.

Boeing

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the current value of contracts placed with the Boeing company;

(2) what is the annual amount of money paid out to the Boeing company for each year since 1979;

(3) how many contracts have been placed with Boeing in each year since 1979.

Mr. Alan Clark: The only contract placed with Boeing Aerospace Inc. since 1979 is that for AWACS aircraft in 1987, amended to include a seventh aircraft in 1988. The contract value cannot be given, for reasons of commercial confidentiality. I shall write separately to the hon. Member as soon as all details are available on contracts with Boeing Helicopters Inc.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment has been made of the military and strategic circumstances in which all British nuclear weapons could be negotiated away.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Peace has been maintained in Europe as a result of the possession of both nuclear and conventional forces by the United Kingdom and our NATO allies. There can be no question of negotiating away our nuclear deterrent while other states possess or are seeking to acquire a nuclear weapon capability that could pose a threat to this country.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Authority Associations

9. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the Association of County Councils; and what matters were discussed.

30. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the Association of District Councils; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met representatives of the district councils to discuss local government finance.

Mr. Chris Patten: I met representatives of the Association of County Councils and other local authority associations on 21 May. We discussed the community charge.

Detergents

13. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to counter the possible adverse environmental consequences resulting from the use of detergents.

Mr. Trippier: The National Rivers Authority is responsible for monitoring the possible adverse effects on the water environment resulting from the use of detergents. It has recently commissioned a study by the water research centre on the appearance of foam on some rivers. The Department has placed a study contract to review any adverse effects which may occur due to possible changes in formulations of detergents and other cleaning agents.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to introduce a maximum limit for phosphate content in detergents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The Department has no plans at present to limit the amount of phosphate in detergents. It has placed a study contract to review any adverse effects which may occur if polyphosphates used in cleaning agents are replaced by other chemicals.

Waste Disposal

16. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to increase public confidence in the management and disposal of waste.

Mr. Chris Patten: The best way to increase public confidence in waste management is to ensure that high environmental standards are consistently maintained.

Through the Environmental Protection Bill we shall be strengthening controls on waste management by increasing the powers available to local authorities for licensing and enforcement. At the same time, we shall increase the information available on public registers about local waste operations and require local authorities to publish annual reports on their policies and performance in regulating waste disposal.

Atmospheric Pollution

20. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met representatives from the National Society for Clean Air to discuss atmospheric pollution.

Mr. Trippier: Although my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has not met representatives of the National Society of Clean Air he is familiar with its work.

78. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to increase the controls over air pollution.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Existing air pollution controls are being reinforced in a number of ways. In particular, the Environmental Protection Bill strengthens and extends existing controls over air pollution from industrial plant and streamlines statutory nuisance control over other sources. We will shortly issue the draft plan to achieve substantial reductions in emissions of 20_2 and NOx from existing large combustion plants in the United Kingdom, and we are bringing in strict new standards to cut emissions of NOx, CO_2 and hydrocarbons from cars.

Lead Plumbing

21. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the latest estimates at current prices of the capital investment required to replace all lead plumbing in those houses which are entirely or partially affected.

38. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are his latest estimates at current prices of the capital investment required to replace all lead plumbing in those houses which are wholly or partially affected.

Mr. Trippier: This information is not available.

Eastern Europe

22. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with his European Community counterparts regarding joint action to assist the countries of eastern Europe in tackling environmental pollution.

Mr. Trippier: Community assistance to eastern European countries in dealing with their grave environmental pollution problems was discussed at the informal Environment Council on 21 April at Ashford castle. I took part in this meeting which noted the substantial financial commitments for environmental aid already made by the Community as a result of earlier discussions.

29. **Mr. Gwilym Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action the Government will be taking to assist the countries of eastern Europe in cleaning up environmental pollution.

Mr. Chris Patten: The extent of the environmental damage done by the communist regimes in eastern Europe requires international assistance. The United Kingdom is acting primarily through the joint programme co-ordinated by the European Commission for all the G24 countries. Following visits by joint teams of experts, initial programmes of projects are being implemented for Poland and Hungary. The process of formulating programmes has begun for East Germany and Czechoslovakia, and is expected to extend to Romania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. The United Kingdom bilateral know-how fund for eastern Europe, administered by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, is available to help with the transfer of British skills in dealing with these problems. The fund has already assisted the planning meeting on the Czech environment problems at East London polytechnic last weekend. Wider proposals for transfer of British expertise in management of the environment are being worked up and assessed.

Local Government Finance

23. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has had any recent representations seeking replacement of the community charge with a tax on property values.

Mr. Portillo: As far as I am aware no one has made a representation to me in favour of a roof tax based on capital or site values.

26. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many suggestions he has received for alternatives to the community charge for the raising of local government finance.

Mr. Chope: I receive a large number of suggestions on local government finance. There is no intention, however, to replace the community charge as the fairest means of securing a contribution from local residents towards the cost of local services.

31. **Mr. Nicholas Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average level of community charge in inner London in boroughs that were *(a)* Conservative controlled and *(b)* Labour-controlled before 3 May.

Mr. Chope: The figures are as follows: Conservative-controlled, £209; Labour-controlled, £445. They are based on charges at 1 April 1990.

34. **Mr. Terry Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the average community charge for all the metropolitan districts if the percentage of their expenditure met from external funding was the same as Wandsworth; and if he will make a statement.

41. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the average community charge for all the London boroughs if the percentage of their expenditure met from external funding was the same as Wandsworth; and if he will make a statement.

44. **Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the average community charge for all the London boroughs if the percentage of their expenditure met from external funding was the same as Wandsworth; and if he will make a statement.

52. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the average community charge for all the London boroughs if the percentage of their expenditure met from external funding was the same as Wandsworth; and if he will make a statement.

57. **Mr. Caborn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the average community charge for all the metropolitan districts if the percentage of their expenditure met from external funding was the same as Wandsworth; and if he will make a statement.

61. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the average community charge for all the metropolitan districts if the percentage of their expenditure met from external funding was the same as Wandsworth; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the average community charge for all the metropolitan districts if the percentage of their expenditure met from external funding was the same as Wandsworth; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the average community charge for all the metropolitan districts if the percentage of their expenditure met from external funding was the same as Wandsworth; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The community charge everywhere in England would be £278 if councils budgeted in accordance with their standard spending assessment after disregarding the effect of the safety net and other special reliefs, low rateable value grant and inner London education grant. For every additional £1 per adult spent the community charge per adult is increased by £1. For every £1 per adult saved the community charge per adult is reduced by £1. Any grant or support system based upon the spending decisions rather than the needs of individual authorities would penalise the prudent and reward the extravagant.

81. **Mr. John Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to invite interested groups and local authorities to submit views on the changes desirable to the community charge; and if he will make a statement.

39. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to invite interested groups and local authorities to submit views on the changes desirable to the community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Interested groups and local authorities do not, in my experience, need formal invitations to submit views on the community charge. I have received a large number of comments and suggestions on the subject. Constructive comment is always welcome.

42. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate what changes are likely to take place in the standard spending assessment as it relates to Warwickshire.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend has said that he will consider any fresh evidence on standard spending assessments (SSAs) which is put before him. Officials are also involved in discussions with local authority representatives. It is too early to say whether this work will result in changes to SSAs.

47. **Mr. Robert Hicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the number of representations that he has received from Cornwall and Devon about the community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The information requested by my hon. Friend is not available. However, I continue to receive representations from members of the public in Cornwall and Devon about the community charge.

49. **Mr. Andy Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what would be the average capital value rates bill on a property worth *(a)* £50,000, *(b)* £80,000 and *(c)* £100,000 in Dagenham in 1990-91 assuming such a system had to raise the same amount of revenue as the community charge.

Mr. Chope: Figures placed in the Library on 4 April show illustrative levels of capital value based rates in 1990-91 were such a system to be used to raise the same amount nationally as the community charge. The implied bills in Barking and Dagenham for properties worth *(a)* £50,000, *(b)* £80,000 and *(c)* £100,000 are £546, £874 and £1,092 respectively.

51. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide details of the review into the poll tax being undertaken by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

66. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further measures he is considering in respect of the poll tax.

84. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the proposals for changes to the poll tax currently under review.

95. **Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on proposals for changes to the poll tax currently under review.

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to reduce the impact of the poll tax on lower income families during the current year.

Mr. Portillo: We are looking to see what improvements, if any, should be made to the operation of the community charge. If and when any such improvements are identified they will be announced.

56. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on changes to the poll tax in 1991-92.

Mr. Portillo: I receive a large number of suggestions on local government finance. However, the community charge is the fairest means of securing a contribution from local residents towards the cost of local services.

60. **Mr. Allen McKay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to meet representatives of local authority organisations to discuss the poll tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend met representatives of the local authority associations on 21 May to discuss the community charge.

62. **Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on changes to the poll tax in 1991-92.

Mr. Portillo: I have received a wide variety of suggestions including many designed to reduce the level of charge which some authorities are levying.

Mr. Andrew MacKay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the implementation of the community charge.

Mr. Chope: The vast majority of local authorities in England have been working very hard to ensure that the new system is working efficiently in 1990-91. The registration process was successfully completed on time with a total figure in accordance with the Government's estimate of the adult population. All authorities have now sent out some bills and are beginning to collect the community charge. Almost all authorities sent out their bills net of transitional relief and community charge benefit.

73. **Dr. Michael Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what a person on average male earnings would pay in local income tax in 1990-91 in order to raise the same amount of revenue as the community charge in Yeovil.

94. **Mr. Summerson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what a person on average male earnings would pay in local income tax in 1990-91 in order to raise the same amount of revenue as the community charge in England.

Mr. Portillo: The level of local income tax payable by a person on average male earnings would depend on the precise way in which such a system were introduced and on the tax allowances which were available.

Illustrative figures exemplifying possible local income tax rates and the bill payable with a taxable income of £12,800 were placed in the Library on 4 April.

For South Somerset this showed a bill of £955 and an England average bill of £949.

74. **Mr. Wilshire:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what would be the average capital value

rates bill on a property worth *(a)* £80,000 and *(b)* £100,000 in Spelthorne in 1990-91 assuming such a system had to raise the same amount of revenue as the community charge.

Mr. Chope: Figures placed in the Library on 4 April show illustrative levels of capital value based rates in 1990-91 were such a system to be used to raise the same amount nationally as the community charge. The implied bills in Spelthorne for properties worth *(a)* £80,000 and *(b)* £100,000 are £789 and £986 respectively.

101. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average level of community charge, discounting the safety net, in London in boroughs that were *(a)* Conservative controlled and *(b)* Labour controlled before 3 May.

Mr. Chope: The following are the figures: Conservative-controlled, £267; Labour-controlled, £478. They are based on charges at 1 April 1990.

109. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what would be the average capital value rates bill on a property worth (i) £50,000, (ii) £80,000 and (iii) £100,000 in *(a)* the metropolitan areas and *(b)* Dover in 1990-91, assuming such a system had to raise the same amount of revenue as the community charge.

Mr. Chope: Figures placed in the Library on 4 April show illustrative levels of capital value based rates in 1990-91 were such a system to be used to raise the same amount nationally as the community charge. The implied average bills in *(a)* the metropolitan areas for properties worth (i) £50,000, (ii) £80,000 and (iii) £100,000 are £543, £868 and £1,086 respectively and in *(b)* Dover £436, £697 and £871 respectively.

111. **Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on services being cut by the charge-capped local authorities.

Mr. Portillo: Local authorities which did not accept the caps which my right hon. Friend proposed and which put forward alternative figures have provided him with information about the implications of the proposed caps. My right hon. Friend is carefully considering all the information available to him before taking his decisions on the final caps of these authorities.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance the Government are giving to local authorities in England on keeping the poll tax register up to date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Practice note No. 3, "The Community Charges Register", which was produced jointly by the Government and the local authority associations, contains guidance on the maintenance of the register and subsequent canvasses. Copies have already been placed in the Library of the House. We have prepared more detailed guidance to local authorities in a new practice note, "Maintaining the Community Charges Register" which we propose to issue as soon as possible.

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish figures showing average local authority rents and average local authority rates in each local authority area in 1989-90 and average local authority rents and the new community charge in the same areas in 1990-91.

Mr. Chris Patten *[holding answer 17 May 1990]:* I am arranging for tables to be placed in the Library of the House showing, for each authority, *(a)* the average weekly rent in 1989-90, *(b)* the percentage increase in rent in 1990-91 over 1989-90 as reported to the Department on subsidy claim forms, where available, *(c)* the average community charge at 1 April 1990 and *(d)* the average rate bill per household in 1989-90. Information on the level of rents in 1990-91 is not yet available.

25. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make an official visit to Italy for the world cup; and if he will make a statement.

88. **Mr. Ashton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the visit to Italy by the Minister for Sport to discuss crowd control with the organisers of the world cup.

Mr. Moynihan: I visited Rome, Cagliari, Milan and Genoa between 7 and 10 May and held productive discussions with the Italian authorities about safety and security arrangements in connection with England's participation in the World Cup finals. We were able to reach agreement on a range of important issues including the commitment of the Italian Government to prosecute English supporters who break Italian law and to deport those whose behaviour was undesirable.

Other measures agreed include arrangements at the port of Genoa, restrictions on the sale of alcohol and sporting weapons, ticket sales, ground security, segregation of rival supporters, and police arrangements during the tournament.

Electricity Generation

27. **Mr. Curry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress is being made in reducing emissions of carbon dioxide and other gases harmful to the atmosphere resulting from electricity generation.

Mr. Trippier: Using 1980 as a base line, the United Kingdom is committed to reducing emissions of sulphur dioxide (SO_2) by 60 per cent. by 2003 and oxides of nitrogen (NOx) by 30 per cent. by 1998 from existing large combustion plants including power stations. In 1988 emissions of SO_2 and NOx from power stations were 13 per cent. and 10 per cent. lower, respectively, than in 1980. Decisions on the extent to which the United Kingdom should reduce projected emissions of carbon dioxide will need to be taken in a global context, in the light of the work on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the second world climate conference in November.

Planning

28. **Mr. Bidwell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on the subject of the Hindu temple at Bhaktivedanta Manor, following the announcement of his decision on the appeal by the International Society for Krishna Consciousness against a planning decision by Hertsmere borough council.

Mr. Moynihan: The International Society for Krishna Consciousness have entered notices of motion in the High Court that the decisions of the Secretary of State be quashed in respect of both the enforcement notice appeal at Bhaktivedanta Manor and the appeal against refusal of

permission for a new temple near Elstree. In addition, 12 representations have been received about the decisions announced on 20 March, 10 of those representations were critical of the decisions, and two welcomed them.

36. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to enable local authorities to establish a register of lobbyists, on which anybody promoting, assisting or acting for those seeking planning permission would be required to register.

Mr. Moynihan: I do not believe that such a register would serve a useful purpose.

Countryside Commission

32. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment by what amount funding for the Countryside Commission has increased since 1979.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Subject to the approval of Parliament, we propose to increase the Countryside Commission's grant-in-aid to £25·136 million in 1990-91. This represents an increase in real terms of 112 per cent. over the allocation of £5·6 million in 1979-80.

Environment White Paper

33. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish his next White Paper on the environment.

87. **Mrs. Wise:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish his next White Paper on the environment.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: This autumn.

Environmental Conference, Bergen

35. **Ms. Quin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Bergen conference on the environment.

67. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement regarding the tackling of environmental problems discussed at the United Nations regional ministerial conference in Bergen on the Bruntland report.

Mr. Trippier: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Ynys Môn.

Cement Industry

37. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to ensure rapid planning decisions in relation to the supply of chalk for the cement industry in southern England.

Mr. Moynihan: The Government are preparing guidelines to provide a national planning policy framework for the long-term supply of raw materials for the cement industry to be published for consultation later this year. I expect these to help both industry and the planning authorities to deal with applications as expeditiously as possible.

Rural Development Commission

40. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to meet the new chairman of the Rural Development Commission; and what matters will be discussed.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: It is hoped that my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside will meet the new chairman of the Rural Development Commission during the summer to discuss the commission's corporate plan.

Local Authorities (Grant Aid)

43. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will undertake a review of the grant aid system for all local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: We have said that we shall consider any new evidence on standard spending assessments before we come to take decisions on the 1991-92 revenue support grant settlement.

46. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the per capita standard spending grant to *(a)* Westminster, *(b)* Wandsworth, *(c)* the average for all London authorities and *(d)* Derbyshire county council.

Mr. Chope: Revenue support grant, expressed as an amount per adult, will be paid in 1990-91 as follows: *(a)* Westminster, £791, *(b)* Wandsworth, £689, *(c)* all London authorities, £556 (comprising an average of £885 for inner London boroughs and, on average, £388 for outer London boroughs). Revenue support grant will be paid to district and borough councils only. It will not be paid to Derbyshire county council. The average for all districts in Derbyshire will be £184. These figures take account of safety net contributions and receipts.

Rents

45. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about private landlords who have not reduced the rent inclusive of rates following the introduction of the community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) on 8 February, *Official Report*, Vol. 166, column *756*. The Department has received a number of letters from hon. Members on this subject, and our explanatory leaflet "You and the Community Charge: Rents" has now been published and widely distributed.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average council rent, excluding rebates, in England; and what information he has on the average council house rent in Basildon district council area and the average new town corporation rent in Basildon.

Mr. Chope: The information is as follows:

Average weekly unrebated rent (£ per week)

	April 1990
England	[1]23·26
Basildon district council	25·95
Basildon new town corporation	26·00

[1] Provisional estimate.

Low-cost Housing

48. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress is being made in increasing the supply of low-cost housing for rent and to buy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any proposals for enabling young people to enter the housing markets either as tenants or owner-occupiers.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Members to the answer given on 21 February 1990 to the hon. Members for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) and for Hemsworth (Mr. Buckley) by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope), *Official Report*, column *749*.

African Elephant

53. **Mr. Geraint Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a further statement on the effectiveness of international action to protect the African elephant.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The decision taken by the seventh conference of the parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) to prohibit commercial trade in African elephants and elephant products has substantially reduced the demand for ivory. There is as yet little clear information about the effect of the trade ban on the illegal killing of elephants, but a prominent expert has suggested that prices overall have fallen to such a low level that poaching is no longer worth while, and in some areas may have almost stopped. I hope that this will soon be the case in all parts of Africa.

Unleaded Petrol

54. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the consumption of unleaded fuel as a percentage of total fuel consumption; and what was the figure for April 1988 and April 1989.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: It is estimated that in April 1990 unleaded petrol consumption accounted for 32·3 per cent. of total petrol consumption. The figures for April 1988 and April 1989 were 0·4 per cent. and 15·2 per cent. respectively.

Ozone Layer

55. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the forthcoming ozone layer conference in London in June.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The second meeting of the parties to the Montreal protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer is due to be held in London from 27 to 29 June. The Government look forward to hosting the meeting, and the preceding working groups, on behalf of the United Nations Environment Programme.

Nuclear Waste

58. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much money was spent by his Department last year on activities connected with nuclear waste management.

Mr. Trippier: It is not possible to provide information in the form requested. My Department spent an estimated £8 million in 1989-90 on research related to nuclear waste management and an estimated £500,000 in 1988-89 on regulating nuclear establishments under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps the radiochemical inspectorate branch of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution takes to keep county councils informed of permissions to dispose of low-level radioactive waste within their areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Low-level radioactive waste may be disposed of only under the strict terms of authorisations issued by HMIP under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960. Consultation with local and other public authorities is required by the Act before authorisations are issued in respect of nuclear licensed sites and promises occupied by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority. Consultation is also required by the Act where disposal from non-nuclear premises requires special precautions to be taken by local and public authorities. This statutory consultation has been extended administratively to cover these disposals where they take place on private landfill sites or on authorised premises.

In addition to this, and except for reasons of national security, copies of all certificates of authorisation are sent to local authorities, including county councils, in whose area the disposal is to take place, normally 28 days before the authorisation takes effect.

Contaminated Land

59. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to require local authorities to set up registers of contaminated land.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: An amendment will be introduced into the Environmental Protection Bill in the Lords, following discussions with the local authority associations on some of the detailed practicalities involved in setting up local registers, including the timescale and methodology to be used.

Recycling

63. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the Government's target for recycling; and what steps it is taking towards meeting it.

50. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about Government measures to assist and promote post collection and sorting of refuse into recyclable material.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Government have set a target to recycle 50 per cent. of recyclable household waste by the year 2000. To achieve this we are proposing to provide, through the provisions of the Environmental Protection Bill, the right waste management framework to promote recycling. The provisions include: stricter controls on waste disposal by landfill and other means which will increase their costs and make recycling more attractive; requiring all local authorities involved in waste collection and disposal to give priority to recycling, wherever practicable, in their plans; allow authorities to

specify environmentally favourable options for waste disposal, such as recycling, even if they are not the cheapest in financial terms: permit collection authorities to arrange for the recycling of all waste that they have collected, unless the disposal authority has an existing recycling contract for it; and require waste disposal authorities to pass to collection authorities the savings that accrue because refuse has been recycled rather than passed to them for disposal.

Joint Department of Trade and Industry and Department of the Environment expert groups have been examining market failures related to the recycling of post consumer waste and exploring ways to increase recycling in the future. We intend to incorporate their findings in the forthcoming White Paper on the environment.

The Government are working with local authorities to develop projects like recycling city in Sheffield and Cardiff where new methods of collecting and processing recyclables are being tried and which can, when fully evaluated, be used as models for future practice. We shall be providing comprehensive advice to local authorities to assist them in the production of recycling plans and the development of recycling projects. Advice will also be given to the public to explain the vital role they will have to enable their waste to be recycled.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry will be continuing to hold discussions with manufacturing industry to encourage it to develop products that can be easily identified and collected for recycling.

Marine Environment

64. **Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met representatives from Greenpeace to discuss the marine environment.

Mr. Trippier: We are always prepared to consider the views of voluntary bodies concerned with the environment. For the marine environment we look particularly to the marine forum for environmental issues to bring together those with a contribution to make in this field and my hon. Friend the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley), met representatives of Greenpeace in a meeting organised by the forum on 23 May 1989.

93. **Mr. Fearn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further powers he proposes to seek in respect of the marine environment.

Mr. Trippier: Powers which enable the better protection of the marine environment from pollution through more effective control of industrial discharges to water and air are included in the Environmental Protection Bill, together with other provisions such as additional controls on dumping from ships aimed at further protecting the sea from damaging inputs.

Sports Facilities

65. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next intends to meet the chairman of the Central Council for Physical Recreation to discuss sporting provision.

Mr. Moynihan: My last formal meeting with the chairman of the Central Council of Physical Recreation was on 2 May. No further meetings are planned for the immediate future, although we meet regularly on an informal basis.

70. **Mr. John Carlisle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next expects to meet the chairman of the Sports Council to discuss the placement of its grants.

Mr. Moynihan: My next formal meeting with the chairman of the Sports Council will be on 20 June. We will discuss a range of issues relating to sport and recreation.

Phosphates

68. **Mr. Livsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to control the entry of phosphates into the water medium.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Details of measures which will reduce inputs of phosphates into the water medium are listed in the United Kingdom North sea action plan. The decision to ban dumping of sewage sludge at sea, and to treat all substantial sewage discharges to sea will further reduce nutrient inputs by between 10 per cent. and 20 per cent.

Lower Grange Estate

69. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he approved grants for new homes at the Lower Grange estate; and what assurances he was given as to when the building of new homes for sale and to rent and the modernisation of existing homes was to start.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 28 February 1990, *Official Report*, Vol. 168, column *197*.

I understand that a contract has been let for the estate action scheme and work will start on site very shortly.

The city grant arrangements are being finalised; work is required to start within three months of these being completed.

Work on the new-build houses for rent has already started.

Diesel Emissions

71. **Mr. Roger King:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he is taking to secure European Community-wide agreement on the reduction of emissions from diesel engines.

Mr. Trippier: The United Kingdom has long been pressing the Commission to bring forward tight new standards for exhaust emissions from heavy duty diesel engines. At the March meeting of the Environment Council, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State explained in more detail what we hoped to see. He urged that the draft directive should aim for the so-called US 1994 standard, which is the strictest embodied in any legislation in the world. The Commission has now published its proposal. Regrettably, it falls short of the United Kingdom's objectives and my right hon. Friend has written to the Environment Commissioner telling him that the United Kingdom will be pressing for a substantial tightening of the proposed standards. We hope that this can be achieved without further delay to a directive which is already overdue.

Empty Property

75. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set a target of reducing the percentage of Government-owned empty property from 18 per cent. to 2 per cent.

Mr. Chope: It is the Government's stated policy to sell surplus properties wherever possible. The Department actively encourages other Government Departments to reduce numbers of empty dwellings and to let property to local authorities or housing associations where sale is not possible: some 570 such lettings have already been arranged by the Ministry of Defence which aims to reduce its empty stock to 9 per cent. by 1992-93.

90. **Mr. Henderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will take steps to ensure that Government-owned empty property is used for the homeless.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning gave to the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Miss Hoey) on 25 April, *Official Report*, column *315*.

92. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of Government-owned housing is empty.

Mr. Chope: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning on 27 February to the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), *Official Report*, volume 168, columns *180-81*.

Climate Change

76. **Mr. Bevan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps the Government are taking to improve the capability of predicting climate change.

83. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action the Government is taking to improve scientific understanding of climate change.

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what contribution the United Kingdom is making to the scientific assessment of global climate change.

Mr. Trippier: The Department is adding to the Meteorological Office's established expertise in climate modelling with the climate prediction programme at a cost of some £6 million per year. The programme will enable the United Kingdom to continue to play a leading international role in improving predictions of climate change.

This Department and the Department of Energy have supported the major international science assessment undertaken by Dr. John Houghton, chief executive of the Meteorological Office, as chairman of the World Meteorological Office/United Nations Environment Programme Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), working group I. The total cost will be £675,000. The working group will finalise its report at a meeting in Windsor on 23 to 25 May.

A wide range of research aimed at improving understanding of climate change and its impacts is supported from the science budget through the research councils. Expenditure in 1989-90 was estimated at some £35 million. Part of the additional allocation to the research councils announced on 10 January this year will further extend this work.

Estate Programme

77. **Mr. Hind:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many applications he has received for grants from the estate programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: For 1990-91, my Department received 326 outline bids for estate action resources to support new schemes. We have invited authorities to take forward 119 of these proposals. We expect, in addition, to provide further resources for over 200 schemes started in earlier years. Under the new financial regime loan charges on borrowing authorised by estate action credit approvals, which are charged to the housing revenue account, are fully eligible for housing revenue account subsidy, and estate action grant is now being phased out.

Water

79. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much the water industry plans to invest in improved standards of water quality and environmental improvements over the next 10 years.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague).

89. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the Water Services Association to discuss the connection of new properties to the water supply system.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: This is not a subject which the Water Services Association has raised with my right hon. Friend in recent months.

103. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps the National Rivers Authority is taking to monitor leakage levels from the water distribution system.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The monitoring and control of leakage from water distribution systems is primarily a matter for water undertakers. However, the National Rivers Authority obtains from them information about leakage in considering the judicious use of water resources.

106. **Mr. Lofthouse:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met the Water Services Association to discuss the quality of water supply.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. Friend plans to meet the Water Services Association on 18 July.

Noise Pollution

80. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to control the noise pollution caused by light aircraft, power boats and other forms of motorised pleasure craft; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Department of the Environment is currently engaged in carrying out a review of noise control. The working party on the review aims to produce a report in time for its conclusions and recommendations to be taken up in the environment White Paper. Noise from light aircraft has been identified by the working party as an area of particular concern.

Noise from powerboats and other pleasure boats is most effectively controlled by means of byelaws. These can be used to restrict noise from vessels both in coastal waters and on inland waterways.

Rivers

82. **Mr. Lee:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentages of United Kingdom and European rivers are good or fair quality.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: A review of river classification schemes across the European Community published in 1988 by the water research centre showed that 95 per cent. of river length in the United Kingdom was of good or fair quality compared with 75 per cent. in the European Community as a whole. The review also indicated that no other member state bettered our position.

86. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the level of pollution of the River Thames through London.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The 1985 river quality survey showed that the Thames is largely of "good" or "fair" quality—within the top two categories of the national classification scheme. A copy of the survey is in the Library of the House. More recent information on a directly comparable basis is not currently available, although the National Rivers Authority will be conducting another national survey during 1990, the results of which will be published in 1991.

The classification system used for recent river quality surveys gives an overall measure of the levels of pollution in a river. Detailed information on levels of individual pollutants can be obtained from the public registers maintained by the National Rivers Authority. These include the results of the analyses carried out of routine samples taken of river water; and the registers available for inspection at the National Rivers Authority's Thames office contain data obtained from sampling at many sites on the Thames.

Sewage Pollution

85. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the steps he has taken to implement his undertaking to ban discharges of raw sewage into the seas and estuaries around the United Kingdom.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Discussions are now under way between my Department and the National Rivers Authority, the Office of Water Services and the sewerage undertakers to work out the detailed arrangements for implementing our policy on sewage discharges. The sewerage undertakers are being asked to draw up investment programmes to give effect to the policy.

City Action Teams

91. **Mr. Quentin Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress of the work of the city action teams.

Mr. Portillo: The city action teams continue to play a vital role in co-ordinating the Government's action for cities in their areas. They are also making good progress in encouraging co-operation between business and industry, local and central Government and the voluntary sector in the revitalisation of the inner cities. The appointment in December of Ministers to help each city action team in its work has given a new impetus to their activities.

European Community

96. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next expects to meet his counterparts in the European Community to discuss pollution control.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside will be attending the next meeting of the Environment Council on 7 and 8 June.

Sulphur Dioxide

97. **Mr. Hayward:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the trend in the urban concentration of sulphur dioxide since 1979.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Following is the information:

Sulphur dioxide:
Trends in average urban concentrations in the United Kingdom

	Sulphur dioxide (micro-grammes per cubic metre)	*Concentration index*
1979-80	57	100
1980-81	48	84
1981-82	50	88
1982-83	41	72
1983-84	40	70
1984-85	38	67
1985-86	37	65
1986-87	36	63
1987-88	35	61
1988-89	33	58

Source: Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics, No. 12.

Average urban concentrations of sulphur dioxide fell by 42 per cent. between 1979-80 and 1988-89.

Ozone Episodes

98. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his Department's monitoring of the occurrence of ozone episodes.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: On behalf of the Department, Warren Spring Laboratory operates a 17-site national ozone monitoring network, with 12 key sites permanently linked to a co-ordinating and assessment centre, allowing the constant evaluation of the United Kingdom ozone climate.

During ozone episodes, or should any site measure ozone concentrations above 60 parts per billion, the Department makes data from the network available to the public.

Low-level ozone is created by the action of sunlight on nitrogen oxides and hydrocarbons. These pollutants are transported across national boundaries, and the Department sponsors a substantial programme of research into the computer modelling of ozone episodes as part of an international commitment to reduce their occurrence.

Homelessness

99. **Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current number of homeless people accepted by local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Latest estimates of households accepted as homeless appear in table 1(a) of "Local authorities' action under the homeless provisions of the 1985 Housing Act: England. Results for the fourth quarter 1989. Supplementary Tables", which is in the Library.

108. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many agencies committed to helping the homeless have been denied financial help by the Government in the current financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Hammersmith on 11 May, *Official Report*, column *245*.

Methyl Chloroform

100. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make it his policy to agree to a ban on the production and use of methyl chloroform when the Montreal protocol to control chlorofluorocarbons is renegotiated in an international conference in London in June.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: It is the Government's aim ultimately to phase out all ozone-depleting substances.

Football

102. **Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assistance his Department will give to football clubs wishing to redevelop or move to new stadia in order to meet the recommendations of Lord Justice Taylor's final report.

Mr. Moynihan: My right hon. Friend is considering the issue of planning policy guidance on the considerations relevant to new and redeveloped stadia for Football League clubs and on other matters. We hope to issue a draft consultation document soon.

In addition, the Chancellor has announced that pool betting duty is to be reduced from 42 per cent. to 40 per cent. on condition that the full amount saved will be passed by the pools promoters to the Football Trust 1990 to be used by them to improve the safety and comfort of spectators in accordance with the recommendations contained in Lord Justice Taylor's final report.

Right to Buy

104. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make provision for tenants of non-resident landlords to have the right to buy their house; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: No.

105. **Mr. Gow:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council houses and flats have been sold to their tenants in England since May 1979; and what proposals he has to extend further to council tenants the opportunity to become owners.

Mr. Chope: Over 1·1 million local authority and new town tenants bought their houses in England between April 1979 and the end of December 1989, mainly under the right to buy.

The right to buy was extended from 1 March 1990 to new property which is particularly suitable for elderly persons and to existing property suitable for elderly persons let for occupation by younger disabled persons. Local authorities are also making increasing use of their power to pay cash incentives to help existing tenants buy homes of their own; in the current year, 81 schemes have been approved with the potential to release 2,572 vacancies.

Endangered Species

107. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plan he has to improve further the protection of endangered species.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 introduced for the first time in Great Britain comprehensive statutory protection for endangered wild species and their habitats. The 1981 Act also provides that the Nature Conservancy Council is required to submit proposals on schedule 5 (animals) and schedule 8 (plants) every five years (quinquennial review). As a result of the first such review in 1986 the numbers of species receiving protection was increased to 113 species of wild animals and 91 species of wild plants. The next quinquennial review is due to be submitted in 1991.

"Polluter Pays" Principle

Mrs. Maureen Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy as to charging polluters for the cost of implementing policies to clean up the environment.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Government's policy remains that the polluter pays the costs of pollution control. The Environmental Protection Bill introduces new charges so that firms will also pay the costs of administering the regulations.

Supermarket Trolleys

112. **Mr. Michael Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to control the nuisance of abandoned supermarket trolleys.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Clause 93 and schedule 4 to the Environmental Protection Bill, inserted on report, empower local authorities to seize, remove and retain

shopping and luggage trolleys which appear to them to have been abandoned. Trolley owners wishing to recover trolleys which have been seized will have to pay a charge to the authority. These new powers, on which the Retail Consortium and British Rail had been consulted, should ensure that abandoned trolleys are no longer left to spoil local amenities or cause danger to motorists and pedestrians.

Wetlands

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last designated an area under the Ramsar convention on the conservation of wetlands of international importance; if he will indicate the area which is next to be designated; and when he expects to designate it.

Mr. Trippier: The last Ramsar designations in England, Pagham Harbour and the Wash, were on 30 March 1988, although the north Norfolk coast site was extended on 20 January 1989. Responsibility for the designation of sites in Scotland rests with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, who announced the designation of four Ramsar sites in Scotland on 25 April 1990, bringing the Great Britain total to 43.

I cannot forecast which site will be designated next, nor when. Government officials are currently carrying out consultations of a number of sites.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will designate the peatlands of Thorne and Hatfield moors under the Ramsar convention on the conservation of wetlands of international importance.

Mr. Trippier: I cannot forecast whether Thorne and Hatfield moors will be designated under the Ramsar convention. They have been identified by NCC as a potential Ramsar site, but no formal case has yet been submitted.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the species and scientific features of national or greater importance in the peatland area known as Thorne and Hatfield moors.

Mr. Trippier: I will write to the hon. Member with details of the information requested.

Leasehold Houses

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the number and distribution of leasehold houses.

Mr. Chope: The English house condition survey estimated that there were 1 million leasehold houses in England in 1986.

The highest concentrations were in the north-west (50 per cent.) and the west Midlands and Yorkshire and Humberside (15 per cent. each). The inter-censal survey for Wales in 1986 estimated that there were about 87,000 leasehold houses in Wales.

Rents-into-Mortgages Scheme

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has recently met tenants' group representatives to discuss the introduction of a rents-into-mortgages scheme for public sector tenants.

Mr. Chope: No.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when he expects to complete his review of the Scottish Office's rents-into-mortgages scheme;

(2) if he will commission a report into the desirability of introducing a rents-into-mortgages scheme for new town corporation tenants.

Mr. Chope: The Scottish Development Department and Scottish Homes are monitoring the scheme and plan a full evaluation.

The relevance of the results for England, including the new town corporations, will be considered as they become available.

Combustion Plants (Emissions)

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish the plan for reducing sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxide emissions from existing large combustion plants.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. Friend intends to publish a draft plan for consultation shortly.

Tenants' Choice

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much will be spent by the Housing Corporation in 1990-91 on the promotion of tenants' choice.

Mr. Chope: The Housing Corporation has allocated £55,000 for tenants' choice publicity in 1990-91. The corporation also provides advice and information to tenants as part of its day-to-day work on tenants' choice.

Eco-labelling

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 25 April, *Official Report*, column *255*, whether he will publish the membership of his Department's eco-labelling advisory group.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I am pleased to announce that Sir Kenneth Durham, former chairman of Unilever plc and Kingfisher plc, has agreed to chair this important advisory group. Sir Kenneth is supremely well qualified to take on this work, having a wealth of experience in both manufacturing and retailing.

We are no less fortunate in the members who have agreed to serve on the group. They are: Ms Julia Hailes (SustainAbility); Mrs. Dorothy Mackenzie (Michael Peters Group, Brand New); Lady Wilcox (chairman of the National Consumers Council); Ms. Pippa Hyam (environmentalist): Mr. Steve Robinson (Environment Council); Mr. Ian Chalk (Reedpack Ltd); Mr. Kenneth Miles (Incorporated Society of British Advertising); Dr. Charles Suckling (scientist and member of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution); Mr. Peter Green (Chief Trading Standards Officer for West Sussex); Mr. Richard Macrory (barrister, reader in environmental law, Imperial college, London); Mr. Nigel Whittaker (Kingfisher plc), Dr. John Adsetts (Albright and Wilson); Mr. Mike Rosen (Sainsburys); and Mr. John Jack (IBM).

They have the challenging task of advising my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment

and for Trade and Industry on setting up an effective and workable scheme of labelling for environmentally more benign products, in line with the principles set out in my right hon. Friend's statement of 9 January. An important part of this task will be to advise on the UK input to negotiations with our European partners on the establishment of a single European Community-wide scheme of environmental labelling. Our aim is to secure such a scheme in time for the first labels to be awarded by the end of 1991 and we will be pressing our European partners to achieve that timetable if at all possible.

Public Appointments

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the full-time and part-time public appointments for which he is responsible, together with the salary and the date when the appointment is due for renewal.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Cabinet Office publication "Public Bodies", produced annually, lists the part-time and full-time public appointment for which I am responsible and includes details of salaries: a copy is available in the Library of the House.

In addition, the Cabinet Office publication "Women into Public Appointments" provides information on numbers of appointments due for renewal each year, and the average length of such appointments. A revised edition is due to be published next month and a copy will be placed in the Library of the House.

Gravel Quotas

Mr. Walden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how county council's gravel quotas are assessed.

Mr. Moynihan: There are no specific quotas for gravel production for county councils. However, MPG 6 sets out guidelines for aggregates provision in each region. These guidelines are then apportioned to local authority level by the regional aggregates working party machinery and serve as indicative figures for planning purposes.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many staff are employed by his Department; and what proportion of them are employed in each of the standard regions.

Mr. Chris Patten: I refer the hon. Member to "Civil Service Statistics 1988-89", table 3 a copy of which is in the House of Commons Library.

Waste Recycling

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will estimate the cost of establishing a source separation infrastructure throughout England and Wales and the percentage of that cost which would be met by *(a)* the public purse and *(b)* the private sector;

(2) if his Department has made an assessment of the cost of establishing source separation infrastructure and of how much of that cost will be met from *(a)* the public purse and *(b)* market co-operation, excluding any public body, grant, financial credit or other indirect support;

(3) if he will make it his policy to allow an increase in expenditure by local authorities to cover the costs of source separation;

(4) if his Department has made an assessment of mechanised separation of domestic waste and the contribution it could make towards reaching the Government's target of 50 per cent. domestic waste recycling by the year 2000; and if he will make a statement;

(5) for how long he estimates local authorities will be able to sustain source separation without legislation;

(6) if his Department has made any assessment of the source separation of domestic waste as opposed to mechanised separation in terms of *(a)* cost, *(b)* efficiency and *(c)* substitutability;

(7) what assessment he has made as to whether source separation of domestic waste, prior to recycling, is the most efficient and market oriented means of collection and reclamation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: Issues of collecting and sorting domestic waste with a view to recycling have been addressed by the advisory group on recycling jointly run by my Department and the Department of Trade and Industry. We are conducting further surveys and research into various aspects of source separation, mechanised separation and recycling. The results of this work are being assessed and will be reflected in the forthcoming White Paper on the Environment which may include proposals for any further legislation and financial measures that are necessary.

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he will take to ensure that the Government's target of recycling 50 per cent. of domestic refuse by the year 2000 will be achieved.

Mr. Trippier: The 50 per cent. target will be achieved by a combination of measures, including the provisions of the Environmental Protection Bill which will require action by local authorities to promote recycling and enable the true cost of alternative methods of waste disposal to be identified. We also intend to being forward provisions to enable incentives in the form of recycling credits to be received by those directly responsible for promoting recycling. In addition we are evaluating the outcome of the expert advisory group on recycling with a view to stimulating the market for recycled materials.

Landfill

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of financial incentives he has considered in order to encourage the recycling of domestic waste in place of landfilling.

Mr. Trippier: The measures in the Environmental Protection Bill to improve controls and introduce separate accounting for the landfilling of waste will, by making the true costs of landfill more apparent, provide a greater incentive for recycling of waste. It is also the Government's intention to introduce a further amendment to the Bill that will require waste disposal authorities to pass any money that they save because waste has been sent for recycling, rather than landfilling or other disposal, to the authority that is responsible for that recycling. Other measures have been discussed by the advisory group on recycling and are currently being evaluated; these include tax or other financial incentives to encourage manufacturers to use recycled materials, assistance with the capital costs of new

recycling plant or collection facilities, continued research and development support for recycling processes and the introduction of deposits on selected items.

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will make it his policy that any incentive, through financial credit for avoiding landfill costs by recycling waste, will not be restricted to the recovery of glass, plastics, metals and newpaper, but will be specifically related to the amount of landfill that is avoided by the use of various recycling mechanisms;

(2) if he will make it his Department's policy to promote financial credits from disposal authorities to collection authorities for waste diverted from landfill, and that such credits will be paid for from the public purse; if he has made any estimates as to the size of this increase in public expenditure; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will consider a sliding scale for financial credits to waste collection authorities, increasing in response to *(a)* volume of waste diverted from landfill, *(b)* volume of waste recovered, *(c)* volume of waste recycled, *(d)* volume of waste put to alternative use and *(e)* type of waste recovered, with specific attention to hazard and nuisance.

Mr. Trippier: The Government intend to introduce an amendment to the Environmental Protection Bill to provide for a recycling credits scheme and subsequently to undertake full consultation about the precise scope and method of application of such a scheme.

Peat

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department intends to replace the use of peat with refuse-derived humus in major landscaping projects.

Mr. Trippier: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms. Walley) on Monday 30 April 1990, column *380*.

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many tonnes of peat his Department uses each year.

Mr. Trippier: About 200 tonnes of peat are used in the royal parks each year. The PSA uses about 80 tonnes for ground maintenance at properties for which it provides services.

Bathing Waters

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is his Department's total budget for carrying out research into the health risks of bathing in sewage-contaminated water in *(a)* the 1990 bathing season and *(b)* the 1991 bathing season;

(2) what is his policy in respect of establishing a dose-response relationship between the level of sewage pollution of United Kingdom bathing waters and the risks of contracting swimming-associated ailments; and what is the shortest time in which this could be achieved;

(3) what assessment he has made of the most likely microbiological agents responsible for swimming-associated gastroenteritis due to sewage pollution of bathing waters; and if these agents were *(a)* analysed and *(b)* found to be present in specimens taken from volunteers in the Langland bay study;

(4) what assessment he has made of the total cost of establishing a dose-response relationship between the level of sewage pollution of United Kingdom bathing waters and risks of contracting gastroenteritis and other swimming-associated ailments by *(a)* the healthy volunteer method, and *(b)* the methods used by the United States Environmental Protection Agency;

(5) when he will be making public the full results of his Department's preliminary research into the health risks of bathing in sewage-contaminated water conducted in Langland bay in 1989.

Mr. Trippier: The cost of the study at Langland bay in 1989 was £155,000, of which the Government contributed £135,000. The report of the study is expected soon, and copies will be placed in the Library. We are considering what follow-up work is required.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the relationship between risks experienced by healthy adult volunteer swimmers of bathing in sewage-contaminated water and those experienced by children.

Mr. Trippier: Children were not included in the healthy volunteer study.

House of Commons (Air Conditioning)

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the rooms, offices and working spaces within the House that have air conditioning; and if he will list the criteria for having the air conditioning on and working.

Mr. Chope: Only a small area of the accommodation occupied by the House is air conditioned. The main areas are:

(a) The Chamber and surrounding rooms which were rebuilt in the late 1940s;
(b) Offices in the various infill blocks. Upper Committee Corridor (North) and (South) and the Commons Court block—with no natural ventilation;
(c) Refreshment Department kitchens.

It is the practice to have the air conditioning on when the rooms are being used.

Genetically Modified Organisations

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will list the people he appointed to the new advisory committee on genetically modified organisations and the organisations to which each belongs.

Mr. Trippier: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East, (Mr. Moss) on 27 April last, *Official Report*, column *344*.

New Midland Forest

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received the report from the Countryside Commission on the proposed new midland forest; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I understand that the Countryside Commission expects to submit the report on the results of its consultations at about the end of July.

Stack Gases

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on the studies currently undertaken to detect dioxins in stack gases.

Mr. Trippier: Studies of this sort form part of a wide-ranging investigation of dioxin emissions being made for my Department by Warren Spring Laboratory. The study is in its early stages and results are not yet available.

Sewage Works

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to require the installation of phosphate stripping works at all sewage works; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The National Rivers Authority is responsible for setting the quality standard of sewage works effluents. The Department has no plans to alter the present case-by-case system whereby phosphorus stripping is required in the few locations such as the Norfolk Broads and Loch Neagh where the receiving waters show signs of nutrient enrichment.

Nature Conservancy Council for England

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the cost of advertising for the post of chief executive of the Nature Conservancy Council for England.

Mr. Trippier: The estimated cost of advertising the post of chief executive in the new NCC for England is some £15,500, exclusive of VAT.

Local Government (Voting Rights)

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has considered the representations which he has received from local authorities that the dates for implementing sections 13 to 18 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 should be deferred.

Mr. Portillo: I have concluded that it will simplify the tasks of local authorities in implementing the new rules on the composition of their committees and sub-committees and on allowances for councillors if they are given more time in which to make the necessary arrangements. The provisions on these subjects and the necessary statutory instruments will come into effect on 1 August 1990, rather than 1 June and 1 July as previously suggested.

Mortgage Transfers

Mrs. Roe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many mortgage lenders have adopted the statement of practice on the transfer of mortgages; and whether he will publish a list of those lenders.

Mr. Michael Spicer: We have been notified of 188 mortgage lenders who have adopted the statement of practice, which protects borrowers whose mortgages may be transferred to other lenders.

The statement of practice requires that a lender who wishes to be free to transfer a borrower's mortgage must make this clear to the borrower. If this was not done when the loan was taken out, it must be done before any transfer takes place, and any borrower who then objects will not have his mortgage transferred.

I am today publishing a list of those lenders. A copy of the list has been placed in the Library, together with a copy of the statement of practice on the transfer of mortgages.

I welcome the widespread adoption of this statement which will reassure borrowers. I am grateful to the associations representing mortgage lenders for their assistance in bringing the statement to the attention of their members.

Rosebay Oil Spillage

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he plans to ask the National Rivers Authority to investigate the incidence of oil pollution in the South Hams rivers and estuaries resulting from the Rosebay oil spillage; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will outline the powers of the National Rivers Authority to take action in cases such as the Rosebay incident where the original pollution occurred outside National Rivers Authority jurisdiction.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 21 May 1990]:* The National Rivers Authority has no powers in relation to this type of incident outside controlled waters as defined under the Water Act 1989. Once oil pollution drifts inside controlled waters it has powers to take remedial action under section 115 of the Act. In such cases the National Rivers Authority co-operates with the Department of Transport's marine pollution control unit which is responsible for oil clean-up at sea and with local authorities which are principally responsible for coastline clean-up.

I understand that the National Rivers Authority is already investigating the incidence of oil in controlled waters although it has no remit to investigate the cause of the incident. It is co-operating with the marine pollution control unit, Devon county council and other affected local authorities in both preventive and remedial measures.

Ivory

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment from what date Her Majesty's Government will consider ivory to be pre-regulation within the context of granting exemptions under article 6 paragraph 1(a) of Council regulation No. 3626/82.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 21 May 1990]:* The European Community CITES committee has decided that the sale of African elephant ivory within the European Community is possible under article 6.1(a) of Council regulation 3626/82 where the ivory was imported legally before 1 January 1984 or in compliance with regulation 3626/82 between 1 January 1984 and 14 June 1989: ivory imported between 14 June 1989 and 18 January 1990 may be sold only if import took place under an authorised exemption provided for in regulation 2496/89. The Department will consider applications under article 6.1(a) for the sale of African elephant ivory on this basis.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he is prepared to provide on applications for exemption under article 6.1(a) of European Community regulation 3626/82.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 21 May 1990]:* Information on applications for exemptions under article 6.1(a) of EC regulation 3626/82 is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. As from October 1988 a record of exemptions granted under article 6.1 has been maintained and information on the number and species covered by the exemptions given since then could be provided.

Parish Councils

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many parish councils have been formed in urban areas since his Department's circular 121/77; and if he will list them, by local authority area, together with their dates of creation.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 22 May 1990]:* I regret that there are no accurate statistics of the numbers of parish councils. Even if the term "urban areas" were to be defined it would not be possible to obtain the information sought without substantive research at disproportionate cost.

Urban Reviews

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many reviews have been conducted by urban authorities under the Local Government Act 1972.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 22 May 1990]:* Section 48(8) of the Act requires district councils to keep the whole of their district under review for the purpose of considering whether or not to make proposals to the local government boundary commission concerning the arrangements for parishes in their area.

To date 205 non-metropolitan districts and 13 metropolitan districts have carried out reviews which have resulted in proposals being made to the commission. I do not know how the term "urban authorities" is to be interpreted.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 24 May 1990

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools have so far opted for grant-maintained status; and how many applications are at present being processed.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has so far approved 37 proposals for grant-maintained status and has announced that he is minded to approve a further three proposals subject to agreement with the governing body about minor modifications to admissions arrangements. Eleven proposals have been published following parental ballots in favour of an application for grant-maintained status and will reach my right hon. Friend for decision shortly. The governing bodies of six schools where parents have voted in favour of an application have yet to publish proposals.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many primary schools have shown an interest in seeking grant-maintained status.

Mrs. Rumbold: No ballots have so far been held at primary schools on grant-maintained status. Of the 37 schools which my right hon. Friend has so far approved for grant-mantained status, 35 are secondary schools and two are middle-deemed secondary schools. Recently numerous of the larger primary schools have requested copies of the DES booklet "Grant Maintained Schools: Questions Parents Ask".

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of opt-out ballots have resulted in a decision in favour of grant-maintained status; and at how many schools there has had to be a second ballot.

Mrs. Rumbold: Parental ballots have been held at 89 schools—parents at 68 of these schools (75 per cent.) have voted in favour of an application for grant-maintained status. Second ballots have had to be held at eight schools because the turnout in the first ballot was below 50 per cent. A second ballot may also be held at a school where at least 12 months have elapsed since the first balloting took place. One school has held a second ballot in such circumstances—in this case parents voted against an application in 1989, but in favour of an application in 1990.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many of the schools which have opted for grant-maintained status are *(a)* grammar schools, *(b)* voluntary-aided schools and *(c)* single-sex schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: Of the 37 schools which my right hon. Friend has so far approved for grant-maintained status *(a)* 14 are selective and 23 are non-selective schools; *(b)* six were voluntary-aided schools, six were voluntary-controlled schools, one was a special agreement school and 24 were county schools; *(c)* 13 are single-sex boys' schools, six are single-sex girls' schools and 18 schools are co-educational.

Of the three schools which my right hon. Friend has announced that he is minded to approve for grant-maintained status *(a)* one is a selective school and two are non-selective schools; *(b)* all three are county schools; *(c)* one is a single-sex boys' school and two are co-educational.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the average turnout figure in parental ballots taken in schools on whether to obtain grant-maintained status.

Mrs. Rumbold: The average participation rate so far in parental ballots is 67·5 per cent.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has on the level of rises or falls in admissions to grant-maintained schools; and where such changes have taken place.

Mrs. Rumbold: Information about admissions to grant-maintained schools in September 1990 is not yet available. However, earlier this year the Grant Maintained Schools Trust carried out a survey of applications for places for September 1990 at a number of grant-maintained schools. It found that applications had increased by 40 per cent. on average over last year at those schools for which it had information. For example, at Baverstock school in Birmingham there were 350 applications for 210 places, representing an increase of 50 per cent. over last year. At Hendon school there has been an increase of 100 per cent. in applications over 1989.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science which local authorities are selling back services to schools which have become grant-maintained.

Mrs. Rumbold: Detailed information is not collected by the Department. But our understanding is that many local authorities are selling services to schools which have become grant-maintained. For example, Lincolnshire LEA is offering to sell a range of services including payroll, school meals, ground and property maintenance, advisory, architectural and financial services and in-service training for teaching staff. Grant-maintained schools in Lincolnshire have bought a number of these services on a selective basis.

Governor Training

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much was spent on support grants for governor training in the year 1988-89; and how much is planned to be spent in the current year.

Mr. Alan Howarth: No education support grant was allocated for governor training in the financial year 1988-89. Accounts are not yet finalised for 1989-90, but the amount made available through the education support grant programme for governor training in that year was £4,900,000. The amount which is being made available in the 1990-91 financial year is £5,152,700. The programme is scheduled to continue for a further year.

Schools, North Wiltshire

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools were closed in each of the past five years within the constituency of Wiltshire, North.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Information for parliamentary constituencies or other areas within education authorities is not available centrally.

Schools, Leicestershire

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received, and from whom, regarding opting out of schools in Leicestershire; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has so far received one application for grant-maintained status from a school in Leicestershire. The proposal for GM status from Longfield high school in Melton Mowbray, and the objections received, were given careful consideration by my right hon. Friend before he announced his decision to approve the request for grant-maintained status with effect from August 1990.

Rothera Point Airstrip, Antarctica

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the containment capacity of the retaining berm for the fuel tank farm under construction at the Rothera Point airstrip in Antarctica.

Mr. Jackson: The retaining berm for the fuel tank farm at Rothera Point has a capacity of approximately 125,000 imperial gallons.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what measure he proposes to take to reduce the incidence of dust covering the site of the Rothera Point airstrip in Antarctica; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: Measures to be employed by the contractor to reduce the incidence of dust during construction of the Rothera Point airstrip in Antarctica are given in the final comprehensive environmental evaluation published in September 1989 by the NERC. A copy is in the Library.

Schoolgirls (Achievement)

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what steps the Government are taking to encourage schools to enable girls to achieve across the curriculum;

(2) what advice the Government have given to local education authorities regarding equal opportunity for girls across the curriculum.

Mrs. Rumbold: The duties of local education authorities and others under the Sex Discrimination Act of 1975 were explained in circular 2/76 (WO 20/76).

The broad and balanced education provided by the foundation subjects of the national curriculum is intended to prevent premature specialisation by either boys or girls. The non-statutory subject working groups established to advise on the national curriculum have been asked to bear in mind that the curriculum should provide equal opportunities for boys and girls; and circular 6/89, which accompanied the mathematics and science orders laid under section 4 of the Education Reform Act 1988, advised that it would be particularly important to ensure that boys and girls have equal opportunity and equal encouragement to undertake the full model A science course.

The criteria for initial teacher training specify equal opportunities as an example of a cross-curricular dimension that students should be able to incorporate into their teaching by the time they qualify. It is also required that students learn to guard against preconceptions based on gender.

Government objectives in this area are also supported by the DE Training Agency-funded technical and vocational education initiative (TVEI). One criterion of TVEI, in which nearly all local education authorities are now involved, is that action will be taken to avoid sex stereotyping both in curriculum options and in teaching and learning styles.

Local Management of Schools

Mr. Brandon-Bravo: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a further statement on local management of schools.

Mrs. Rumbold *[pursuant to her reply, 8 May 1990, c. 8-10]:* My right hon. Friend has been asked by several local education authorities to make the necessary regulations to permit them to include special schools in their statutory local management of schools schemes. Before making his decision, he intends to give very careful consideration to all the implications, both for special schools and for pupils with statements of special educational need in primary and secondary schools. He has therefore invited Touche Ross Management Consultants to undertake a detailed feasibility study, and to report their findings to him. Copies of that report will be placed in the Library and will also be sent to LEAs and special schools in both England and Wales. In the light of that report the Government will consider whether, and, if so, when, it will be appropriate to make enabling regulations.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how great a percentage of the average school budget, excluding those which have opted for grant-maintained status, is controlled by the local authority under local management of schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) on 5 February 1990 at column *451.*

Cash Limits

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether there are any changes to the cash limits for his Department's votes.

Mr. MacGregor *[pursuant to his reply, 2 February 1990, c. 397-98]:* Subject to parliamentary approval to the necessary revised estimate, the cash limit for class XI vote 1: schools, research and miscellaneous services, will be reduced as follows:

	Class XI Vote 1 (£)
Current cash limit	653,421,000
Change	−80,000
Revised cash limit	653,341,000

The reduction results from the appropriation in aid of receipts originally expected in 1989-90 from private sector cash sponsorship for the project to build a school in Armenia following the 1988 earthquake. These more than offset increased gross provision in 1990-91 for the project which is nearing completion.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Mr. K. J. Warne

Mr. Steen: To ask the Attorney-General if he will provide the hon. Member for South Hams with a copy of the original signed judgment of the appeal to the social security commissioners by Mr. K. J. Warne of 61 Clobeills, South Brent, South Devon; and the supporting material sent to Mr. Warne by his office during the week commencing 14 May.

The Attorney-General: Yes. I have written to the hon. Member enclosing the documents requested.

Cash Limits

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Attorney-General whether any changes will be made to the Lord Chancellor's Department's cash limit and running costs limit for 1990-91.

The Attorney-General: Yes. Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for the Lord Chancellor's Department, class X, vote 1 will be increased by £1,832,000 from £319,300,000 to £321,132,000.

The increase reflects transfers from other Departments, of £1,915,000 from the Property Services Agency to cover responsibilities formerly exercised by that agency and of £20,000 from the Department of Trade and Industry for work to be undertaken by the Law Commission. It also reflects a transfer of £103,000 to the Department of Social Security for additional work falling to the legal aid assessment office.

The supplementary estimate also gives effect to an increase of £2,000,000 in the Department's provision for departmental estate maintenance which is fully offset by an increase of £2,000,000 in net recoveries from civil fees. These increases will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

The running costs limit for the Department will be increased by £1,898,000 from £279,084,000 to £280,982,000.

ENVIRONMENT

Office Complex, Warwick

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment why he decided not to call in the planning decision of Warwickshire county council to allow the firm Conoco to build an office complex at the Warwick technology park.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Outline planning permission for Warwick technology park was granted by Warwickshire county council in 1986. It is very rare for the Secretary of State to call in a reserved matters application and this application by the county council did not appear to justify such an exceptional procedure.

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether any officials of his west midlands regional staff have been disciplined as a result of the advice given, or failure to give advice, arising from Warwickshire county council's decision to allow Conoco plc to build an office complex at Warwick.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No. I am, however, writing separately to my hon. Friend with a full explanation of the events in question.

Business Rates

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received on the 100-day rule for liability for the business rate for bed-and-breakfast establishments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations on this matter; and I have met several of my hon. Friends to discuss their concerns.

Many home owners providing bed-and-breakfast have argued for a more generous exemption but others, particularly the hotel trade, believe that any exemption in this area could lead to unfair competition. The tourist authorities have represented that the rule could lead to a shortening of the season in which such accommodation is available. We are considering these arguments and others that have been put to us.

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those organisations which responded to his consultation paper of December 1988 on the application of the business rate for bed-and-breakfast establishments.

Mr. Chope: The following organisations responded to the consultation paper on "The boundary between domestic and non-domestic property", issued in December 1988:

The Association of District Councils
The Association of County Councils
The Association of Metropolitan Authorities
The National Association of Local Councils
Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council
Blackpool Borough Council
Bournemouth Borough Council
Cambridge City Council
Carrick District Council
City of London
Cleethorpes Borough Council
Eastbourne Borough Council
East Dorset District Council
Fylde Borough Council
Borough of Great Yarmouth
Hertfordshire County Council
Huntingdonshire District Council
Kennet District Council
Lancaster City Council
Borough of Luton
Middlesbrough Borough Council
Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme
New Forest District Council
North Norfolk District Council

Penwith District Council
Preston Borough Council
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Somerset County Council
South Herefordshire District Council
Tendring District Council
Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council
Vale Royal Borough Council
West Somerset District Council
Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
Wyre Borough Council
Country Landowners Association
The Incorporated Society of Valuers and Auctioneers
Institute of Housing
The Institution of Civil Engineers
The Rating Officers Guild
The Rating Surveyors Association
The Rating and Valuation Association
The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors
Edward Erdman Surveyors
Gerald Eve Chartered Surveyors
Grimley J. R. Eve Chartered Surveyors
Matthews and Goodman Chartered Surveyors
J. P. Sturge Chartered Surveyors
Association of Independent Businesses
British Holiday & Home Parks Association Ltd.
The British Hotels Restaurants and Caterers Association
British Property Federation
British Retailers Association
British Self Catering Federation
Chalfont St. Peter Chamber of Commerce
Cumbria and Lakeland Self-Caterers Association
Federation of Cornwall Hotels and Tourism Associations
Historic Houses Association
The Land Institute
London Chamber of Commerce
The National Association of Warehouse Keepers
The National Council of Hotels Associations
National Federation of Retail Newsagents
The National Federation of Self Employed and Small Businesses Limited
The National Licensed Victuallers' Association
Skegness Holiday Flat Owners Association
The Water Companies Association
Action With Communities in Rural England
British Mountaineering Council
Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals of the Universities of the United Kingdom
Forestry Commission
Oxford Polytechnic
Royal National Institute for the Blind

Community Charge

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of gross income is paid in community charge by persons earning *(a)* £5,000 per year, *(b)* £10,000 per year and *(c)* £20,000 per year when the community charge is (i) £300, (ii) £400 and (iii) £500.

Mr. Chope: The amount paid in community charge would vary depending on entitlement to community charge benefit. The level of benefit applicable in each case would depend on the family and financial circumstances of the individual involved.

Aviation Fuel Pollution

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to ensure that certificates issued under clause 142(4) of the Environmental Protection Bill will not prevent effective action being taken against pollution from Royal Air Force training exercises involving the deliberate burning of aviation fuel and other substances.

Mr. Trippier: My Department is currently discussing with the Ministry of Defence whether amendments may be necessary to the Environmental Protection Bill to ensure that the operational activities of the armed services are not unduly restricted. I will write to the hon. Lady about the outcome of those discussions.

VDUs

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy in respect of safeguards for operatives working with VDUs within his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: My Department aims to provide safe systems and methods of work that are without risk to health for its employees. In providing for the comfort and health of the users of VDUs the Department takes account of the guidance produced by the Health and Safety Executive and jointly by the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency and the Council of Civil Service Unions.

Local Government (Cost)

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out in real terms the cost of local government between 1979-80 and predicted 1990-91 on the basis of *(a)* total expenditure and *(b)* expenditure pro rata for a comparable level of services and the equivalent level of income tax that would be required to finance local government expenditure *(a)* at present levels of services and *(b)* at service levels equivalent to 1979-80, in each of those years.

Mr. Chope: I will write to the hon. Member.

Cash Limits

Mr. David Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any changes to announce to his Department's cash limits.

Mr. Chris Patten: Yes. Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary revised estimates:

(a) the cash limit for class VIII, vote 2 (miscellaneous housing administration and grants) will be reduced by £24,876,000 from £122,908,000 to £98,032,000. There will be a reduction of £25,000,000 on housing action trusts (HATs) as a result of the decision of tenants not to proceed with a HAT in Sunderland. This reduction will be partly offset by increases totalling £124,000 elsewhere on the vote;

(b) the cash limit for class VIII, vote 5 (central environmental services, etc.) will be reduced by £700,000 from £358,596,000 to £357,896,000. This reduction relates mainly to the transfer of responsibility for the Football Licensing Authority (£670,000) to the Home Office from my Department. There is also a transfer of £30,000 to my Department's class VIII, vote 6 (royal palaces, royal parks, historic buildings, ancient monuments and the national heritage) to provide additional funding for the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission to recreate certain documents of importance that were accidentally destroyed;

(c) the cash limit for Class VIII, Vote 6 (royal palaces, royal parks, historic buildings etc.) will be reduced by £305,000 from £150,152,000 to £149,847,000). This reduction relates to the transfer of responsibility for external repair of Horseguards Building to the Ministry of Defence (£235,000), and for road rescue archaeology to the Department of Transport (£100,000). The net reduction of £305,000 on this vote takes account of £30,000 transferred from class VIII, vote 5 to which I referred earlier.

Redundant Churches

Mr. Hague: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he proposes to publish the report on the care of redundant churches carried out by Mr. Richard Wilding.

Mr. Trippier: Mr. Wilding's report, which was presented to Ministers and to the Church Commissioners at the end of March, is being published today, by HMSO. I am arranging for copies to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses. The report gives a valuable overview of the operation of the redundant churches fund and the context in which its work is carried out. In general, the report concludes that the present system for handling and financing the preservation of Church of England churches works well. But it identifies a number of ways in which the present arrangements could be improved, and makes a number of recommendations relating to this and to the handling of redundant churches and chapels of other denominations.

The recommendations also relate to the respective responsibilities of the Department of the Environment and the Church Commissioners in respect of the fund. A number of them, if implemented, would require amendment either of the Pastoral Measure 1983 or of the Redundant Churches and Other Religious Buildings Act 1969. My right hon. Friend welcomes the general thrust of the report. He will be considering all the recommendations most carefully in consultation with the Church Commissioners and there will be discussions with the fund and the advisory board for redundant churches before any conclusions are reached. During this process, they will also take into account any views which other bodies or individuals may wish to make: such comments should be sent to the Department at room C11/02, 2 Marsham street, London SW1P 3EB or to the Church Commissioners at 1 Millbank, London SW1P 3JZ, by 31 August.

I hope that with the aid of this useful and readable report we shall be able to improve still further on the systems for ensuring that the best of our heritage of historic churches which are no longer needed for pastoral use are preserved in the mutual interests of the Church and the nation.

Local Government Employees

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of the total annual cost and the average annual cost of full-time local government employees; and if he will break down the average cost for a full-time equivalent post into pay, national insurance, superannuation and other costs, such as office space, heating, lighting, etc., for each year since 1979-80.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 21 May 1990]:* Actual figures are not available. It is estimated that for 1988-89, the position was as follows:

	£
Total local government employees costs	23,300 million
Average annual cost per full-time equivalent	
of which:	12,100
Pay	10,400
National insurance	700
Superannuation	1,000

Note: Associated employees' costs such as office space, heating, lighting etc, are excluded.

Local Government Finance

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in the *Official Report*, in tabular form for each local authority in England and Wales, the recommended community charge level, the total amount in central Government grant, the number of over-18-year-olds within the area, identifying with an asterisk those authorities which have been charge-capped by his Department.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 22 May 1990]:* I am arranging for information to be placed in the Library of the House showing for each charging authority in England

(a) the average community charge at 1 April.
(b) the charge that would have been set had each notifiable authority spent broadly at the level of its SSA.
(c) the amount of revenue support grant, adjusted for the area safety net, and special transitional grants receivable and
(d) the relevant population for 1990-91 calculated in accordance with the population report.

Comparable figures for Wales are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total level of central Government assistance per charge payer, as expressed on the community charge collection notice for *(a)* Westminster, *(b)* Castle Morpeth, *(c)* Alnwick and *(d)* Berwick-upon-Tweed.

Mr. Portillo: The figures are as follows:

	Revenue support grant	*Special grants*	*Area safety net*
Westminster	865·84	53·32	−75·00
Castle Morpeth	180·25	—	−5·84
Alnwick	193·84	—	48·16
Berwick-upon-Tweed	186·48	17·34	52·18

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing for each charging authority in England in receipt of safety net grant the amount to be withdrawn in (i) 1991-92 and (ii) 1992-93, expressed both in £ million and £ per head.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State proposed last November that transitional protection for the years 1991-92 to 1993-94 would be paid by way of a special grant calculated so that the equivalent of £25 per adult or 25 per cent. of the combined protection given by the safety net and the low rateable values area special grant in 1990-91, whichever is the greater, is withdrawn each year. I will place in the Library a table exemplifying the effects of these proposals.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance has been issued by his Department on the practice of managing agents charging residents of blocks of flats sums of money to pay the poll tax of live-in staff such as caretakers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: A person who is subject to a personal community charge is individually liable to pay the

community charge as it has effect for the year. Only where the joint and several liability provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 apply would another person—the spouse—also be liable for the same amount. It is possible, however, for any person to pay another person's community charge for him or her. If an employer pays an employee's charge, the employer is chargeable to income tax on the amount concerned. Whether or not in such circumstances managing agents seek to defray their costs through charges to residents of blocks of flats will be a contractual matter for agreement between residents and the agents.

Caravans and Chalets

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish new legislation governing the designation of caravans and chalets for standard community charge or business rate; and if he will make a statement on the precise changes he intends to introduce.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by the Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope) on 30 March 1990 to my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field), at columns *346-47*.

Residential Holiday Centres

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance his Department has issued on the designation of accommodation used by staff at residential holiday centres for the collective community charge; what monitoring of such designation he has undertaken: and if he has any plans to review the use of such designations.

Mr. Portillo: A building may be designated for the purposes of the collective charge if, in the opinion of the community charges registration officer, the building is used wholly or mainly as the sole or main residence of individuals most of whom reside there for short periods and are not undertaking full-time courses of education and if it would probably be difficult to maintain the register and collect payments in respect of the building if a designation were not made. Advice on the application of the collective community charge was given to local authorities in the Department's practice note 14. A person may appeal against a designation for the collective charge first to the charging authority and then to a valuation and community charge tribunal. We will continue to monitor the application of the collective charge, but at present I see no need to change the provisions governing designation.

Tied Tenants

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration he has given to the situation of tied tenants who own separate accommodation for retirement or job loss and are liable for both personal and standard community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: In addition to the classes of circumstances which have been prescribed by the Secretary of State, authorities have wide discretion to specify their own standard charge classes so as to reduce the standard charge multiplier or to levy no charge. We have given authorities advice on the scope and exercise of their discretion. It is open to authorities to provide for cases where a person is required to live elsewhere as a condition of his employment, such as in the case of tied tenants.

I am concerned that not all authorities are using their discretion sensitively and my right hon. Friend is considering what further adjustments may be needed for 1991-92.

ENERGY

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Stockton, North, *Official Report*, 9 May, columns *166-67*, he will estimate *(a)* the proportion of low and intermediate-level nuclear waste created by the reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel from foreign contracts, which will make up the initial inventory for the Nirex repository and *(b)* the time period over which high-level nuclear waste arising from foreign spent fuel reprocessing contracts will remain in the United Kingdom before being returned to the country of origin.

Mr. Baldry: I understand from British Nuclear Fuels plc that intermediate-level waste arising from the company's overseas reprocessing contracts prior to 1976 is estimated to be in the order of 1 per cent. of the intermediate-level waste included in the initial inventory for the Nirex repository. Low-level waste arising from such contracts will be disposed of at Drigg and not in the Nirex repository.

For the disposal of wastes arising from BNFL's post-1976 contracts and the time period for returning high-level waste from such contracts, I refer the hon. Member to the reply by my hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad) to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 2 May 1986, at columns *500-01*.

Electricity Generation

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what estimates he has made of the impact of *(a)* the commission of new gas-fired generating capacity and *(b)* the importation through east coast ports of low-sulphur content coal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The extent to which the generators construct new gas generating capacity and import low-sulphur coal will depend on the level of electricity demand, fuel prices and capital costs.

Flue Gas Desulphurisation

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what estimates he has made of the impact of the cancellations of plans to instal flue gas emission cleaning equipment in British power stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The electricity generators' present declared intention is to fit flue gas desulphurisation equipment to 8 GW of generating plant. In the longer term, the challenge for British Coal is to make its coal sufficiently attractive to the generators so that they would choose to retrofit further power stations with FGD equipment.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what consideration he gave to the effect on the balance of payments when he permitted the target of 12,000 MW to be fitted with flue gas desulphurisation equipment to be reduced to 8,000 MW.

Mr. Wakeham: It is for the electricity generators to decide how best they can achieve the reduction in emissions of sulphur dioxide called for in the EC large combustion plants directive. The Government, while determined to ensure compliance with the reductions set out in the directive, do not seek to control imports of oil or coal.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what representations he has received from British Boilermakers about the amount of generating plant to be fitted with flue gas desulphurisation equipment.

Mr. Wakeham: I have received a number of representations from the United Kingdom power plant construction industry concerning various issues, including the fitting of flue gas desulphurisation equipment.

Central Electricity Generating Board

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what level of fuel oil stocks were held by the Central Electricity Generating Board in 1989-90 and each year since 1984-85.

Mr. Wakeham: Information relating to the levels of oil stocks for the purposes of section 6 of the Energy Act 1976 is supplied to the Department on a "commercial in confidence" basis and is therefore not published.

Sizewell B

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what, in respect of Sizewell B, is the latest estimate for *(a)* the date of fuel loading and *(b)* the date of full commercial load; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: My Department has just received a major report from Nuclear Electric plc on the progress of Sizewell B and is considering it in detail with the company. We understand that Nuclear Electric remains committed to its existing timetable.

Nottinghamshire Coalfield

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what discussions he has had with the Union of Democratic Mineworkers about job losses in the Nottinghamshire coalfield.

Mr. Wakeham: I meet officers of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers from time to time to discuss a range of issues.

Dinorwig and Maentwrog

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when a generating licence for the pump/storage generation stations of Dinorwig and Maentwrog was granted to the National Grid Company.

Mr. Baldry: A generating licence was granted to the pumped storage division of National Grid Company on 26 March 1990 and came into force on 31 March. Copies of the licences which came into force on vesting day have been lodged with the Libraries of both Houses.

Hinkley C

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when he intends to publish the inspector's report from the Hinkley C inquiry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The inspector's report from the Hinkley C inquiry is still awaited. My right hon. Friend will decide on the arrangements for its publication once it has been received.

Coal Supply

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy how many tonnes of coal British Coal is contracted to supply to National Power and PowerGen this year and in the two succeeding years.

Mr. Wakeham: The British Coal Corporation is contracted to supply the following approximate coal tonnages, at prescribed calorific values, to National Power and PowerGen:

National Power
44 million tonnes for 1990-91 and for 1991-92
40 million tonnes for 1992-93

PowerGen
26 million tonnes for 1990-91 and for 1991-92
25 million tonnes for 1992-93

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what level of coal stocks were held by British Coal and the Central Electricity Generating Board in 1989-90 and each year since 1984-85.

Mr. Wakeham: The level of coal stocks in million tonnes at the end of December was:

	British Coal	*Power stations Great Britain*
1984-85	20·75	14·40
1985-86	9·23	23·94
1986-87	8·70	27·98
1987-88	6·14	25·29
1988-89	7·33	27·00
1989-90	10·05	27·35

Source: Energy Trends, April 1990.

Power stations stocks include those held by the Central Electricity Generating Board and the South of Scotland electricity board.

Spent Nuclear Fuel

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment he has carried out as to the value of reprocessing spent nuclear fuel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: I have nothing to add to the reply given to the hon. Member by my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer) on 26 June 1989, at column *357*.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Wrongful Imprisonment

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by year for the last 10 years, how many people have been wrongfully imprisoned; and what was their length of stay in custody.

Mr. John Patten: The tables give details of the cases referred to the Court of Appeal under section 17(1)*(a)* of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968 in respect of conviction, since 1980 (table I); and of free pardons (for convictions involving custody) (table II).

Table I
References by the Home Secretary to the Court of Appeal under Section 17(1)(a) of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968 in respect of conviction

Years	Number of cases referred	Number of defendants	Appeals allowed
1980	3	3	1
1981	1	1	0
1982	4	7	4
1983	3	3	3
1984	12	14	3
1985	4	4	2
1986	4	4	1
1987	6	13	3
1988	2	2	0
1989	[1]3	6	2
Total	42	57	19

[1] one to be heard

Table II
Free Pardons (for convictions involving custody)

	Number
1980	0
1981	1
1982	1
1983	0
1984	0
1985	0
1986	0
1987	0
1988	0
1989	0

Vagrancy Arrests

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many homeless persons have been arrested under the Vagrancy Act in central London in each year since 1980 and how many in each month since January 1989.

Mr. John Patten: Prosecutions were brought under the Vagrancy Act for sleeping out in the metropolitan district and the City of London as follows:

	Numbers
1980	188
1983	45
1986	4
1987	9
1988	12

Figures for 1989 will be available later in the year.

Trafalgar Square (Incident)

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the 25 mounted officers deployed to disperse demonstrators in Trafalgar square on 31 March were women.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that five of the 25 mounted officers deployed to disperse demonstrators in Trafalgar square on 31 March were women.

Political Asylum

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement as to which factors account for the increase in applications for political asylum in 1989.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Provisional figures suggest that the number of asylum applications increased from 5,105 in 1988 to 12,570 in 1989. The arrival of some 3,700 Turkish asylum seekers in the second quarter was an important factor but there were also significant increases in the number of applications from Somalia, Sri Lanka and Uganda. The overall increase is in line with trends elsewhere in Europe. Individual decisions to seek asylum are rooted in personal circumstances and conditions in countries of origin. In some cases would-be migrants claim asylum in an attempt to circumvent firm controls on other categories of immigration.

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have sought political asylum so far this year.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: A provisional breakdown by nationality of applications made in each quarter is supplied to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Copies are placed in the Library. The provisional total for the first quarter of 1990 is 2,031 applications.

Immigration

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) of 21 May, what information he has with regard to present whereabouts of the 670 immigrants detained on the Earl William in 1987.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There are no central records of those who were detained on the Earl William in 1987.

Seals

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to amend the Seals Act 1970 so as to increase protection of seals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have no plans to do so.

Cash Limits

Mr. Couchman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he intends to make any changes to the 1990-91 cash limits within his responsibilities and to his Department's running costs limit.

Mr. Waddington: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit on class IX, vote 3, Home Office administration, immigration and police support services, England and Wales, will be increased by £2,302,000 to £758,925,000. The additional provision is necessary because of several new initiatives, primarily a new drugs demand reduction task force, increased aid to Colombia for anti-drug trafficking measures, and the expected cost of police investigations if the War Crimes Bill receives Royal Assent. This increase of £1,607,000 will be charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Responsibility for the new Football Licensing Authority has also been transferred to the Home Office from the Department of the Environment and the cash limit for class VIII, vote 5, has been reduced accordingly.

The Home Office running cost limit will be increased by £267,000 from £1,012,392,000 to £1,012,659,000. In addition to the cost of the Football Licensing Authority transferred from the Department of the Environment a further £25,000 has been offset by a corresponding decrease within the Department of Transport's running cost limit (class VIII, vote 2).

PRIME MINISTER

High Commissioner for India

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Prime Minister if she has met the new high commissioner for India; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Yes. I look forward to working with him and to seeing Indo-British relations improve still further during his time in London.

Gujarat

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on her meeting with the Chief Minister of the Gujarat on 8 May.

The Prime Minister: I had a useful discussion with the Chief Minister about current events in Gujarat, and about the Gujarati community in this country.

Cot Deaths

Mr. John Browne: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a further statement on the current findings of the inquiry into the possible link between cot deaths and toxic gases.

The Prime Minister: I am not yet able to add to the reply my hon. Friend the Minister for Health gave the hon. Members for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith), for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) and for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) on 16 May, at column *414*.

Inner-city Development (Leicester)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Prime Minister if she will appoint a Minister to oversee inner-city development in Leicester.

The Prime Minister: In December 1989 the Government announced the formation of a new team of Ministers to help co-ordinate action in inner-city areas covered by city action teams and task forces. Baroness Hooper, Under-Secretary of State for Health, advises the city action team which co-ordinates the Government's inner-city programmes in Leicester.

Advisers

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to her reply of 21 May, *Official Report*, column *17*, if she will list in the *Official Report* the specialism for which each of her advisers who were not career civil servants for each year since 1981 were employed by the Cabinet Office, where relevant; what salary was agreed between each adviser and the Cabinet Office, in those cases where payment was made out of public funds; and what other employment those advisers recorded whilst working in the Prime Minister's office.

The Prime Minister: Advisers offer advice on a range of issues. It is not my normal practice to provide information on individual salaries, or on other employment held by part-time advisers. Special advisers are subject to the requirement applying to all civil servants that they must avoid any conflict of interest with their official duties.

Secretary of State for Energy

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Prime Minister what official back-up is being provided to the Secretary of State for Energy in his new co-ordinating role; to which Department those officials will be allocated; and what provision is to be made for parliamentary questions on his performance of these new responsibilities.

The Prime Minister: The Secretary of State for Energy will be supported by my chief press secretary and his office. He will receive advice as necessary from the Cabinet Office on questions of propriety of Government publicity. Questions arising from the Secretary of State's new responsibilities should be addressed to him. Questions on publicity issues relating to a specific Department should be addressed to the Minister concerned.

TRANSPORT

Traffic Area Offices

Mr. McWilliam: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the staff turnover figures for each of the traffic area offices in the last three years for which information is available.

Mr. Atkins: The following are the figures:

Traffic Area Office	*Percentage Turnover* 1987-88	1988-89	1989-90
North East (Newcastle)	8·5	8·6	2·4
North East (Leeds)	12·3	4·5	27·0
North West	15·4	8·0	12·4
West Midlands	15·6	18·2	13·6
Scottish	26·2	6·3	15·6
South Wales	19·6	8·7	8·1
Western	16·1	11·1	9·7
Eastern (Nottingham)	10·8	6·1	10·1
Eastern (Cambridge)	22·8	22·8	20·0
South East	24·3	17·4	16·6
Metropolitan	25·4	43·5	20·2

(These figures do not include internal transfers)

Rail Electrification

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the estimated rate of return on the investment approved for the electrification of the Carstairs-Edinburgh line.

Mr. Freeman: Electrification of the Carstairs-Edinburgh line for InterCity services was approved by British Rail itself, on the basis that the scheme meets BR's normal criterion of an 8 per cent. financial return for investment in its commercial sectors.

Electric Freight Locomotives

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the expected operational range, in the continental direction, of the new electric freight locomotives, approval for which was announced on 18 May by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Freeman: BR currently plans to operate the new electric freight locomotives as far as Frethun, just beyond the French channel tunnel portal, where trains will be re-formed for journeys into France and beyond.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the number of rail coaches, or train sets, constructed, purchased, or modified for use on channel tunnel services, other than those on London-Paris and London-Brussels services, which he expects to be used on through services beyond London.

Mr. Freeman: This is a commercial matter for British Rail. British Rail published its plans for services beyond London on 14 December and I refer to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Pendle (Mr. Lee) on that date at column *767*. It has not yet submitted its investment proposals.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to apply and publish a cost benefit analysis comparable to that applied to the building of the London Victoria line to the proposed line between London and the channel tunnel.

Mr. Freeman: No.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the disposal procedures adopted for those polychlorinated byphenyls associated with the work begun on a channel tunnel in 1974.

Mr. Freeman: Disposal procedures were generally a matter for the companies concerned. In one instance a contractor, contrary to the terms of his contract, spilt a considerable quantity of polychlorinated byphenyl on site in the course of removing a tunnelling machine. The Department subsequently disposed of the contaminated soil in accordance with procedures based on the recommendations of a firm of consulting engineers, and agreed with the Health and Safety Executive, the Department of the Environment and Kent county council.

Traffic Office, Newcastle

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to be able to announce the conclusions of his review of the northern area traffic office in Newcastle upon Tyne.

Mr. Atkins: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) on 17 May 1990 at column *543*.

Speed Restrictions

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the current criteria for speed restrictions on A roads through villages; and if he has any plans to revise them.

Mr. Atkins: The current criteria for speed limits on all roads including those through villages are set out in circular "Roads" 1/80 and 4/83. Copies of these are available from the Library of the House. They are kept under review.

Railways

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals for further investment in the railway system have been put forward for when the present diesel fleet of high-speed trains are taken out of service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail has no current proposals for the premature replacement of its high-speed diesel train fleet. British Rail expects these trains to remain in service on a number of routes until around the end of the century.

Midland Main Line

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he received the report of the midland main line strategy study entitled "Electrification of the MML—a Key to Prosperity"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: We have not received this report.

Merchant Shipping

Mr. Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will set in hand an examination of the state of the British merchant shipping industry.

Mr. Parkinson: I am pleased to announce the setting up of a joint working party, under my chairmanship and that of the president of the General Council of British Shipping, to establish the present circumstances in which the British shipping industry operates both domestically and internationally. The working party has been asked to report no later than 14 September 1990.

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current size of the British merchant fleet in terms of *(a)* the total number of vessels and *(b)* total tonnage; and what were the comparable figures 10 and 20 years ago.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested has been set out in the form of a table:

Trading vessels registered in the United Kingdom and Crown Dependencies of 500 gross registered tonnes (grt) and above

Date	Number of vessels	Tonnage grt 000	dwt 000
31 March 1990	441	6,072	8,530
31 December 1979	1,305	25,232	41,221
31 December 1969	2,002	22,274	32,386

dwt = deadweight tonnage.

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received concerning the size of the British merchant fleet; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: We receive representations from all sections of the shipping industry, including most recently NUMAST. I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed) by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State earlier today, announcing the setting up of a joint working party with the General Council of British Shipping.

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total number and tonnage of new merchant vessels registered in Britain in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. McLoughlin: Figures for new registrations of British ships are provided in the table, which shows separately the vessels registered in the United Kingdom's Crown dependencies and dependent territories. The figures relate to the calendar year 1989 and to trading vessels over 500 gross registered tonnes (grt).

	Number	Tonnage 000's grt
United Kingdom	20	137
Crown Dependencies	10	183
Dependent Territories excluding Hong Kong	18	274
Hong Kong	33	1,039

Cash Limits

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what changes he proposes to make to the cash limit and running costs limit for his Department.

Mr. McLoughlin: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary and revised estimates, the cash limits in class VII will be changed as follows:

	Current cash limit £000	Change £000	Revised cash limit £000
Class VII Vote 2	256,266	−3,030	253,236
Class VII Vote 4	129,904	+3,005	132,909

These changes to the cash limits take account of the following transfers from class VII vote 2:

(a) £2,813,000 to class VII vote 4 of certain departmental running costs;
(b) £192,000 to class VII vote 4 as a result of the transfer of responsibility for medical fees for heavy goods vehicle and public service vehicle driving licence applications to the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency. These fees will be reclassified as running costs; and
(c) £25,000 of departmental running costs to class IX vote 3 for some civil aviation services.

The Department's running cost limit has been increased from £320,734,000 to £320,901,000.

The changes do not add to the planned total of public expenditure.

General Council of British Shipping

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met representatives of the General Council of British Shipping; and what was discussed.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Secretary of State and I regularly meet the General Council of British Shipping to discuss a wide range of shipping issues of mutual concern. The last such meeting was on 3 April.

Radiation

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the typical annual radiation dose equivalent exposure for crew members serving on board ships for a typical voyage duration owned and operated by Pacific Nuclear Transport Ltd., and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Over the period 1983 to 1989 inclusive, the average annual radiation dose received by crew members serving on board ships owned and operated by Pacific Nuclear Transport Ltd. ranged from 0·1 to 0·4 mSv. Over the same period the maximum annual radiation dose received by an individual was between 0·5 and 1·7 mSv.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on how many occasions within the last 15 years there has been an accidental release of radiation or exceptional levels of emission from irradiated fuel flasks or other radioactive material containers on board ships owned and operated by Pacific Nuclear Transport Ltd.; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: There have been no significant releases of radioactivity from irradiated fuel flasks or other radioactive material containers on board ships owned and operated by Pacific Nuclear Transport Ltd. Transporting spent fuel by sea has been carried out safely since the mid-1960s.

Road Accidents

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration has been given to the provision of alternative methods, other than central crash barriers, of preventing crossover accidents on dual carriageways.

Mr. Atkins: Consideration has been given to a number of alternatives including earth bunds, dense shrubbery and "arrester strips". All were assessed to be less safe, less practicable or otherwise less effective than safety fences and barriers.

M66

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about progress on the M66; and when he expects it to be open.

Mr. Atkins: Supplementary orders for the northern section of the scheme in the Rhodes and Heaton Park area

(which involves widening of the existing M66) were published this week. Construction of this section should start next year. Supplementary orders for the rest of the scheme will be published in the autumn with a view to start of works in 1992. The Department aims to have the whole of the new motorway open in 1996.

Bypasses

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the number of, and total value of, bypass schemes in the forward road programme at 1990 prices.

Mr. Atkins: There are at present more than 150 bypass schemes in the road programme, with a total works cost of about £3·5 billion at 1990 prices.

British Rail (Grants)

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much money the Government have provided in grants to British Rail in each of the last five years and for what purposes, at current prices.

Mr. Freeman: Figures for Government support paid to the British Railways Board are given in the table. They include both the public service obligation grant under EC regulation 1191/69 and section 3 of the Railways Act 1974, which compensates BR for maintaining loss-making passenger services on Network SouthEast and provincial (InterCity services were removed from the obligation on 1 April 1988), and level crossings grant under EC regulation 1192/69. Final claims have yet to be agreed for the years 1988-89 and 1989-90.

	Cash	*1990-91 prices*
1985-86	838	1,110
1986-87	689	882
1987-88	783	951
1988-89	557	632
1989-90	511	544

London Regional Transport

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how much money the Government have provided in grants to London Buses Ltd. in each of the last five years and for what purposes, at current prices;

(2) how much money the Government have provided in grants to London Underground Ltd. in each of the last five years, and for what purposes, at current prices.

Mr. Freeman: The Government pay grant to London Regional Transport which is responsible for distributing it to its subsidiaries, including London Buses Ltd. and London Underground Ltd.

The total grant for the last five years at 1989-90 prices has been as follows:

	£ million
1985-86	391
1986-87	347
1987-88	271
1988-89	203
1989-90	287

The purpose of the grant is to meet LRT's cash deficit; the Government do not pay specific grants to LRT for specific purposes. Over the last five years the proportion of the grant devoted to revenue subsidy has reduced while the proportion supporting capital investment has increased. The effect has been that LRT's investment has grown by 42 per cent. in real terms over the same period.

Civil Aviation (Fire Safety)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment his Department has made of the Civil Aviation Authority's net safety benefit analysis, particularly in relation to validity of the statistics used and the assumptions made concerning time and duration of fires.

Mr. McLoughlin: The net safety benefit analysis is not the sole basis for the CAA's position on smoke hoods. It is the way in which the benefits and disbenefits of passenger smoke hoods can be weighed in a situation where there is a potential for loss of life due, for example, to delay in evacuation, as well as the saving of life. In the light of the inevitable lack of precise evidence as to the progress of an aircraft fire, and the time taken to evacuate in such incidents, both the CAA and the Department accept that there will always be some element of subjective assessment in work of this nature.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will outline the process and procedures of evaluation to be undertaken *(a)* by his Department and/or *(b)* by the Civil Aviation Authority in order to measure the effectiveness of alternative smoke hood systems for aeroplanes and to certify those that meet the required performance standards.

Mr. McLoughlin: The statutory responsibility for the safety regulation of United Kingdom civil aviation rests with the Civil Aviation Authority. The required level of passenger protection to be provided by any smoke hood is set out in CAA specification No. 20 which was developed in consultation with industry. I am advised that the authority has received our initial applications for approval of smoke hoods, now reduced to three by the withdrawal of one applicant. To date no evidence has been provided or demonstrated to the authority that any smoke hood can provide the specified level of protection in the event of an aircraft fire.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will make it his policy to make smoke hood provision mandatory in civilian aeroplanes once equipment has been certified as being capable of meeting the appropriate Civil Aviation Authority standard.

Mr. McLoughlin: The statutory responsibility for the safety regulation of United Kingdom civil aviation rests with the Civil Aviation Authority. The mandatory provision of smoke hoods on civilian aeroplanes is a matter for the authority.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what development period he estimates will be required before he will be able to legislate for water spray systems to be fitted as standard on civil aeroplanes.

Mr. McLoughlin: The statutory responsibility for the regulation of United Kingdom civil aviation rests with the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). I am advised that the

CAA, the United States Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), and Transport Canada are currently co-operating in a research programme to test the effectiveness of cabin water spray systems in civil aircraft. The CAA's research into narrow-bodied fuselage systems should be completed by later this year. FAA research into wide-bodied aircraft fuselage fires is also expected to be completed by the end of this year. If these tests prove satisfactory, work to finalise a specification for such systems can start in early 1991.

M67-M66-A57 Junction (Traffic Lights)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to approve the scheme to install traffic lights at the roundabout junction of the M67, M66 and A57.

Mr. Atkins: I expect to approve the design of this scheme shortly, with the intention of starting works in the current financial year.

Catamaran (Loss)

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has about the loss of the catamaran Bootlegger off Lulworth cove, Dorset, on 30 July 1988; what investigations have been carried out by his Department into the cause of the loss; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: I will write to the hon. Member.

Roads

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the total value of the forward road programme at 1990 prices; and what percentage *(a)* road building and *(b)* maintenance comprise of the total.

Mr. Atkins: The works value of the entire trunk road construction programme, as published in "Trunk Roads, England: Into the 1990s" is £16,750 million at 1990 prices. Maintenance is not planned in the same way as the construction programme, and figures are available only for the three years to the end of 1992-93; for that period the value of maintenance is £1,685 million cash.

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much money his Department has spent on its road programme in each of the last five years at current prices.

Mr. Atkins: Expenditure on the roads programme in the last five years at 1990-91 prices is as follows:

	£ million
1985-86	801
1986-87	800
1987-88	784
1988-89	832
1989-90	[1]985

[1] Provisional

These figures are net of receipts and exclude expenditure on road and bridge maintenance.

Road Junction (Audenshaw)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will reconsider the decision not to allow the construction of an improved junction for Stamford road/Corporation road, Audenshaw, in Tameside's transportation policies and plans settlement for 1990-91.

Mr. Atkins: We have accepted £203,000 of Tameside's expenditure on minor works for transport supplementary grant in 1990-91. It is for the local highway authority to decide how best to use these and any other resources.

Railway Links (London)

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimates his Department has made as to the approximate cost of constructing *(a)* new cross-London railway links and *(b)* new underground railway links in London, at 1990 prices.

Mr. Freeman: The east-west crossrail and Chelsea to Hackney line proposed by the central London rail study would respectively cost about £1·4 billion and £1·8 billion to build at today's prices. The Jubilee line extension will cost over £1 billion at today's prices. No other proposals for new cross-London or underground links have been submitted to the Department.

Rail Industry (Injuries)

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many railway staff have been killed or suffered major injuries for the period 1979 to 1983 and 1984 to 1988; and what they represent as a proportion per 1,000 railway staff employed.

Mr. Parkinson *[holding answer 22 May 1990]:* In the period 1984 to 1988, 98 staff died and 979 suffered major injuries, totalling 1,077. The average number of staff employed during that period was 181,200. The proportion of deaths and major injuries to 1,000 employed was 5·94 per cent.

In the period 1979 to 1983, 153 railway staff died and 1,613 suffered major injuries, totalling 1,766. The average number of staff employed during that period was 228,200. The proportion of deaths and major injuries to 1,000 employed was 7·74 per cent.

In the period 1974 to 1978, 209 railway staff died and 3,023 suffered major injuries, totalling 3,232. The average number of staff employed during that period was 264,400. The proportion of deaths and major injuries to 1,000 employed was 13·1 per cent.

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the total figures of death and major injuries in the railway industry for the period 1979 to 1983 and 1984 to 1988; and what is the total percentage increase.

Mr. Parkinson *[holding answer 22 May 1990]:* In the period 1974 to 1978 there were 500 deaths (including passengers, staff and others) and 3,855 major injuries, totalling 4,355. In the period 1979 to 1983, there were 374 deaths and 2,330 major injuries, totalling 2,704. This represents a reduction of 37·9 per cent. In the period 1984 to 1988, there were 448 deaths and 1,983 major injuries, totalling 2,431. This represents a reduction of 10·1 per cent.

Railway Inspectorate

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many professionally qualified inspectors were employed by the railway inspectorate for each year since 1979; and what was the full establishment level for each year.

Mr. Parkinson *[holding answer 22 May 1990]:* The number of professionally qualified staff in post at 31 December of each year, together with the establishment for that year, is set out in the table.

Year	*Staff in post*	*Establishment*
1979	22	22
1980	22	22
1981	22	22
1982	22	22
1983	22	22
1984	23	[2]22
1985	23	[2]22
1986	19	[2]22
1987	19	24
1988	16	24
[1]1989	24	32

[1] Includes one part-time.
[2] + 1 supernumerary.

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recommendations were made by the departmental review on the railway inspectorate; and what action he has taken.

Mr. Parkinson *[holding answer 22 May 1990]:* A report of the review was presented in 1987, and included numerous recommendations. A copy is in the Library of the House. Many of the recommendations have been implemented. Work continues on the others.

Speed Limits (Coaches)

Mr. Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consider adding to the MOT test the verification of speed limiters on relevant coaches as soon as possible; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 23 May 1990]:* I am considering adding a check of speed limiter fitment to the annual tests of relevant coaches.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMISSION

National Audit Office

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Chairman of the Public Accounts Commission whether the commission has appointed new auditors for the National Audit Office.

Sir Peter Hordern: Yes. The commission has appointed the firm of Clark Whitehill. The appointment will be for a period of up to five years from 1 April 1990.

CIVIL SERVICE

Cash Limits

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if there are any proposals to change the 1990-91 cash limit for the Office of the Minister for the Civil Service.

Mr. Luce: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for the Office of the Minister for the Civil Service (class XIX, vote 1) will be increased by £978,000 from £42,643,000 to £43,621,000. The increase will be charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

The increase is required to cover the additional cost of making physical security improvements; the initial costs of a new unit to co-ordinate efforts to improve British representation in European Community institutions; the cost of upgrading the management information system for the Civil Service Commission in anticipation of its move to agency status in 1991-92 and the cost of improvements in services provided by the civil service college (this charge will be offset by increased appropriations in aid). Provision is also sought to cover the additional cost of recruitment for the purchasing and supply specialism and recruitment costs of the scheme to prepare candidates for entry to the European Community institutions. The cost of the purchasing and supply recruitment scheme will be met by recoveries from participating Departments together with an increase in expected recoveries from Departments for existing recruitment schemes. The proposed supplementary estimate identifies the cost of civil service college training courses for the staff of the Office of the Minister for the Civil Service offset by recoveries from the Office of the Minister for the Civil Service together with a reassessment of the college's recoveries from other sources.

Some of the changes in provision have a consequent effect on the Department's running costs limit which will be increased by £403,000 from £33,319,000 to £33,722,000.

Crown Servants (Business Appointments)

Mr. Ward: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if he will publish a further report on business appointments of former Crown servants.

Mr. Luce: I have today placed copies of a statistical report entitled "Acceptance of Outside Appointments by Crown Servants—1989" in the Libraries of both Houses of Parliament.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Parliamentary Business

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council what was the cost to public funds of providing an answer to the question tabled by the right hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) on parliamentary business, *Official Report,* 11 May, column *243.*

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Approximately £40.

Printing Costs

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council what is his estimate of the total cost to public funds and the volumes of newsprint that have been involved in the printing this Session of *(a)* the Order Paper, *(b)* the notices of questions, *(c)* the written and oral questions reprinted after appearing for the first time, *(d)* notices of motions, *(e)* Votes and Proceedings of the House, *(f)* Standing Committee proceedings and Division lists, *(g)* remaining Orders of the Day and *(h)* the Vote bundle as a whole.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The total cost to public funds for the supply of the Vote bundle as a whole in this Session up to the end of April, is estimated at £4·1 million. The volume of paper consumed in production of the Vote bundle for the same period is 159 tonnes.

It is not possible to produce the estimated cost to public funds of printing the individual categories of the Vote bundle without incurring disproportionate expense.

Creche

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Lord President of the Council what steps he has taken to consult *(a)* staff unions and *(b)* the staff creche committee about the design of the survey of demand for a workplace nursery in the House.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Following initiatives by the House of Commons Commission and the Services Committee, the Administration Department has been asked to undertake a feasibility study of the provision of child care facilities in the House or in conjunction with other public services in the Westminster area. Once that study is complete any consultation exercise will necessarily embrace all those with an interest.

Railway Warrants

Mr. Speed: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he has any plans to change the number of spouse railway warrants allocated to Members in view of the change in ticket validities recently announced by British Rail.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The resolution of 22 July 1975 limits the number of free return journeys for a Member's spouse to 15. We have no plans to change this.

Stationery

Ms. Walley: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list each item of stationery issued by the Serjeant at Arms stores and the percentage content of recycled paper in each item of scale zero to 100 per cent.

Sir Geoffrey Howe *[holding answer 14 May 1990]:* A list of each item of stationery issued by the Serjeant at Arms stores is shown on the Members' stationery demands form. Currently the ruled writing paper contains 100 per cent. recycled paper and the buff envelopes and file covers contain at least 50 per cent. recycled paper. I understand that approval has now been given by the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee for a number of items, including printed memos, compliment slips and typing top sheets to be replaced by recycled ranges once existing stocks are exhausted and that orders should be placed on an experimental basis for a range of writing paper and envelopes in recycled paper to be available.

New Parliamentary Building

Mr. Ray Powell: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many Members' offices in the new parliamentary building, phase 1, will contain marble fireplaces; and whether provision of such fireplaces has affected the timetable for completion of phase 1.

Mr. Chope: I have been asked to reply.

The hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell) and his colleagues on the New Building Sub-Committee can be assured that there is no basis for the allegations made by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) on 17 May at column 1020. There are no fireplaces in the new Members' offices and those in the restored accommodation are either already in place or are off site being restored. This work is not on the critical path and is not expected to cause problems.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Workplace Nurseries

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment has been made of the effect of his proposals on workplace nurseries on the number of women in the work force.

Mr. Lilley: The proposal to exempt workplace nurseries from tax as a benefit will remove a perceived obstacle to the growth of such facilities. The measure will thus assist employers who wish to set up nursery or similar facilities and the employees who use them; but it is not possible to make a reliable estimate of the likely effect of this change on the number of women in the work force.

Corporation Tax

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has of the number of firms benefiting from raising the ceiling on corporation tax to £200,000.

Mr. Lilley: It is estimated that 20,000 companies will benefit from the increase in profit limits for the small companies' rate of corporation tax and associated marginal relief.

Pay Statistics

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the latest statistics on top people's pay.

Mr. Ryder: Rates of pay are a matter for the parties directly concerned as only they can know what is right for their particular circumstances. The Government have said repeatedly, however, that we are opposed to excessive pay increases since they threaten jobs.

Exchange Rate Mechanism

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects the Madrid conditions for exchange rate mechanism participation to be satisfied.

Mr. Ryder: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer gave to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) on 26 April, at column 475.

Civil Service

Mr. McWilliam: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the number of civil service jobs which he proposes to devolve to *(a)* Leeds and *(b)* Newcastle upon Tyne, indicating to which Departments these jobs apply, together with the original location of these jobs.

Mr. Ryder: Decisions on relocation venues rest with departmental Ministers. I would refer the hon. Member to

the statements made by the Secretaries of State for Social Security and for Health on 14 November 1989, at columns *170* and *197*, about the relocation of DSS and Department of Health posts to Leeds; and to the statement by the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 1 May 1990, at column *466*, concerning the relocation of intervention board posts to Newcastle. In addition, the Secretary of State for Social Security announced on 25 April during a visit to the north-east that 1,000 jobs dealing with national insurance contributions work would be transferred to Newcastle from other regions over the next 12 months.

VAT (Water)

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is the estimated annual cost to industry in Scotland of applying value added tax to water supply from 1 July;

(2) what is the estimated annual cost to industry of applying value added tax to water supply from 1 July;

(3) what is the estimated annual cost to industry in Wales of applying value added tax to water supply from 1 July.

Mr. Major: Negligible. VAT to be charged on water supplies to industry after 1 July will, in virtually all cases, be reclaimable as input tax by those affected.

Capital Taxes Office, Shepherds Bush

Mr. Soley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the number of employees presently employed at the capital taxes office in Shepherds Bush he expects to be unwilling or unable to relocate; and what efforts his Department will be making to find other suitable work for those employees.

Mr. Lilley: All the work of the capital taxes office in Shepherds Bush will be relocated to Nottingham. The number of employees presently working there who will be unwilling or unable to relocate is not known because staff have not, as yet, been asked to state their preferences about moving to Nottingham.

The Department will make every effort to redeploy in other parts of the Inland Revenue or in other Government Departments those employees who cannot or do not wish to move.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the number of employees at the capital taxes office in Shepherds Bush he expects to be relocated to sites in Nottingham within the next three years.

Mr. Lilley: The capital taxes office will be relocated to Nottingham. The number of employees who will move to Nottingham is not yet known.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has for the site of the capital taxes office in Shepherds Bush once the relocation to Nottingham has taken place.

Mr. Lilley: The future of the site in Shepherds Bush following relocation of work to Nottingham will be for the Department of the Environment (Directorate General of Property Holdings) to determine.

Schedule D (Actors and Artists)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to amend the appropriate regulation and/or legislation in order to restore arrangements which allowed actors and artists with a similar work pattern to be taxed under schedule D.

Mr. Lilley: When the House debated this subject on 27 February, as reported in the *Official Report*, at columns 250-56, I promised to consider carefully the suggestion that a statutory provision should be introduced to ensure that performers should be treated as self-employed and not subject to PAYE, irrespective of their position under the usual tests of employment/self-employment laid down by the courts. Having done so, I concluded that it would not be appropriate to make this change. That would be unfair to other taxpayers whose tax treatment is governed by the general rules on employment/self-employment, and would raise the other difficulties I explained in the debate.

I conveyed my conclusions on this issue to the industry shortly after the Budget. It is of course open to it, or any individual actor, to challenge the Inland Revenue's view of the law in the courts. The Revenue will do everything it can to help in selecting suitable cases for appeal if the industry decides it wishes to do so.

Mortgage Interest Tax Relief

Mr. Walden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the cost was to Her Majesty's Treasury of higher-rate mortgage tax relief for the years 1987, 1988 and 1989.

Mr. Lilley: Estimates for financial years are as follows:

Cost of mortgage interest relief at excess over the basic rate of income tax

Year	*£ million*
1987-88	430
1988-89	310
[1]1989-90	430

[1] Provisional.

Cash Accounting

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many value added tax registered traders are eligible to adopt cash accounting; how many have done so; at what cost; and what would be the cost were all those eligible to adopt cash accounting.

Mr. Ryder: Of the 1·7 million businesses registered for VAT, 1·3 million are eligible to apply for cash accounting as their taxable turnover is less than £250,000 a year; but of these, only an estimated 375,000 businesses would benefit from the scheme. Businesses which already benefit from other special schemes, for example, those for retailers and those that regularly receive repayments of tax from Customs and Excise, would gain no additional benefit from cash accounting. To date, some 85,000 businesses have adopted cash accounting at an estimated take-up cost to the revenue of £40 million. If all businesses that would be likely to benefit adopted the scheme the estimated cost to the revenue would be about £180 million.

Pool Betting Duty

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he will cut pool betting duty from 42·5 per cent. to 40 per cent. as proposed in his Budget statement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: In my Budget statement I proposed reducing the rate of pool betting duty from 42·5 per cent. to 40 per cent., subject to review after five years, on condition that the benefit of the reduction is transferred to the Football Trust for use in implementing Lord Justice Taylor's recommendations for improving comfort and safety for football spectators.

I am glad to say that the Football Trust, the pool promoters and football authorities have entered into binding arrangements which will ensure payment by the pool promoters of the whole of the duty reduction to the Football Trust, for use on capital works at Football League and Scottish Football League grounds and the three national stadiums—Wembley, Hampden Park and Windsor Park, Belfast. In addition, the Football Trust expects to allocate £75 million to professional football over the next 10 years from contributions made to the trust from the Pool Promoters Association's spot-the-ball competition. Accordingly, I propose to reduce the rate of pool betting duty to 40 per cent. from 28 May 1990. The new rate will apply to bets made at any time by reference to any event taking place on or after 28 May 1990.

The Football Trust has undertaken to account separately for the moneys made available to it by the reduction in pool betting duty; and to produce an annual statement of this separate account, to be audited by an independent auditor whose report will be made available to Government.

We will be introducing a new clause on the Report stage of the Finance Bill seeking to reduce the duty with effect from 28 May 1990.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Latham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the cost to public funds in the current financial year, and with retrospective effect to 6 April, of increasing the entitlement to transitional relief so as to reflect the actual community charge levied rather than the figures assumed by the Government for local authorities.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 23 May 1990]:* Basing the community charge transitional relief on actual charges would have increased the cost of the scheme by over £1 billion in England. Transitional relief was designed to give some protection to households in the changeover to the new system; it was not designed to insulate charge payers from increases in local authority spending.

Local Government Expenditure

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what rate of income tax would be necessary to finance all current local government expenditure in the United Kingdom;

(2) what rate of value added tax would be necessary to finance all current local government expenditure in the United Kingdom;

(3) what rate of corporation tax would be necessary to finance all current local government expenditure in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 22 May 1990]:* If local authorities spent in line with total standard spending in England and Wales, and total current expenditure in Scotland, total current expenditure would be around £39·8 billion. Assuming that central Government grant to local authorities ceased and that expenditure currently funded in part by local authorities all fell to central Government, this would imply additional central Government expenditure of around £11 billion.

This is equivalent to an increase of around 7½p in the basic rate of income tax, or an increase of 5½ percentage points in the VAT rate, or an increase of around 28 percentage points in the full rate of corporation tax. These calculations take no account of any consequential behavioural effects, which are likely to be significant.

SCOTLAND

Roof Tax

Mr. Favell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many recent representations he has received supporting a roof tax.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has received a handful of letters supporting the Labour party's proposed local tax on houses.

Rents into Mortgages

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the progress of his rents-into-mortgages scheme; if he has any plans to extend its scope; how many tenants have made firm applications; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Response to the scheme has been encouraging so far and indications are that it is attracting the interest of the intended target group. As at 30 April, Scottish Homes the body responsible for the administration of the scheme had received 135 firm applications to purchase. The scheme will continue to be closely monitored with a view to evaluating the case for any adaptations or extensions which appear to be appropriate.

Radioactive Substances

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps the National Radiological Protection Board and nuclear installations inspectorate took to locate and recover the lost caesium at Dounreay seven months ago; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate is satisfied that the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority has conducted a thorough search for the sealed source and has taken all reasonable steps to protect and inform both its employees and members of the public.

Grampian Health Board

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he approved the 10-year strategy of Grampian health board; what are the estimated annual costs of this strategy; and what financial allocations have been made or are to be made for each of the years covered by the 10-year strategy.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Grampian health board's 10-year strategy will be the subject of discussions between NHS management executive and the board at an autumn meeting to review progress on delivering the priorities set out in the SHAPE and SHARPEN reports. The board's strategic plans are expected to consider a range of assumptions about the level of financial resources that might be allocated to it in the future.

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the projected population for the year 1990-91 within the area served by Grampian health board; what is the weighted population used by the Scottish Home and Health Department for grant allocation purposes; and what difference in grant allocation results from these population figures.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The estimated resident population served by Grampian health board in 1990-91 is 505,156. In common with other boards in order to reflect the relative health needs of the area the crude population figure is adjusted to take account of the age, sex and estimated morbidity of the population. The 1990-91 adjusted figure for the Grampian health board is 471,000. Grampian health board's allocation was increased by £13·762 million in the current year.

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the estimated cost to Grampian health board of pay and price inflation for the financial year 1990-91; and what sum of money has been allocated by SHHD to meet these costs.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The allocation to Grampian health board in 1990–91 for recurrent expenditure on hospital and community health services was £187·725 million.

The figure was based on the relative health needs of the board's resident population.

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what financiall allocation was made to Grampian health board for general purposes and medical equipment for the financial years 1989-90 and 1990-91.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It is for boards to determine their spending priorities on medical equipment and other matters within their available resources.

M8 Kingston Bridge

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the structural safety of the M8 Kingston bridge in Glasgow.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The M8 Kingston bridge in Glasgow is the responsibility of Strathclyde regional council. The Scottish Development Department has been assured by the director of roads for Strathclyde region that there is no concern for public safety or to users of the Kingston bridge.

Fishing Vessels

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total number of Scottish registered fishing vessels currently using 110 mm nets and what was the figure for each of the past five years.

Mr. Lang: Under the North sea management arrangements announced in March, 17 Scottish-based vessels have chosen to use 110 mm nets as opposed to limiting the number of days in which they fish in the North sea. Information on the net sizes used by Scottish fishermen in past years is not readily available.

Training

103. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to encourage LEC consortia to submit outline bids for a training credit pilot programme.

Mr. Lang: The Industry Department for Scotland encouraged all local enterprise company consortia which had been awarded development funding by 27 March 1990 to consider bidding to run a training credit pilot scheme. Three consortia (Caithness and Sutherland Enterprise, Grampian Enterprise and Fife Enterprise) submitted outline bids by the deadline of 4 May 1990.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of managing agents providing work-based training under YTS in Scotland are approved training organisations.

Mr. Lang: In Scotland, 99·7 per cent. of managing agents providing work-based training under YTS are approved training organisations.

Coronary Heart Disease

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the source of the table on page 68, appendix 3(ii), of the Scottish Health Service Advisory Council's publication of December 1989 entitled "Prevention of Coronary Heart Disease in Scotland".

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The table was compiled from the following three sources:

1. Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy, Diet and Cardiovascular Disease (The COMA Report), London: HMSO, 1984. (Reports on Health and Social Subjects No. 28).
2. National Advisory Committee on Nutritional Education: Proposals for Nutritional Guidelines for Health Education in Britain (The NACNE Report), London: Health Education Council, 1983.
3. Thomson M et al. Alcohol Consumption and Nutrient Intake in Middle-aged Scottish Men. American Journal of Clinical Nutrition 1988; 47: 139-45.

Copies of the first two reports are in the Library.

Eastern General Hospital, Edinburgh

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money has been invested in the Eastern General hospital, Edinburgh, in each of the last five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Capital expenditure at the Eastern General hospital in the last five years was as follows:

Year	*£*
1985-86	264,155
1986-87	174,130
1987-88	898,092
1988-89	968,719
1989-90	505,655

Cash Limits

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he proposes to make changes to the cash limits for 1990-91 within his responsibility.

Mr. Rifkind: Yes. Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class XV, vote 27: hospital and community health services, family practitioner services (part) and other health services, Scotland, will be increased by £24,274,000 from £2,031,840,000 to £2,056,114,000. This is to provide funds towards the costs of the pay awards to medical staff recommended in the reports of the review bodies for nursing staff, midwives, health visitors and professions allied to medicine and on doctors' and dentists' remuneration and to allow for increased receipts and increased capital expenditure by health boards.

The increase will be charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Tobacco Works, Glasgow

Mr. Michael J. Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he intends to take to bring more jobs to the east end of Glasgow, in the light of the proposed closure of the tobacco works in Dennistoun; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 18 May 1990]:* The announcement of the closure of the Imperial Tobacco factory at Dennistoun—with the associated loss of jobs—is to be regretted. I understand that the decision has been taken on strictly commercial grounds as part of an overall rationalisation programme to enable the company to compete within the single European market. The company's northern trading division will remain in Glasgow.

While the decision is ultimately one for the company, in the light of its commercial judgment, we are concerned that Imperial Tobacco should take all possible steps to alleviate the economic and social effects of the closure on the east end of Glasgow. In this context, it is reassuring that Hanson International, which owns Imperial Tobacco, is to undertake a major counselling, re-training and job search exercise, in addition to its offer of generous redundancy terms to staff who will lose their jobs.

The local enterprise trust, the East End Executive, will be available to complement the company's efforts through the provision of business counselling and advice.

Hazardous Substances

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Gordon, *Official Report*, 11 May, column *240*, when discharges of liquid sodium metal or other occurrences with potential safety implications ceased to be operational matters for the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority; and at what point his Department assumes responsibility.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 23 May 1990]:* The safe operation of the civil nuclear installation at Dounreay is a matter for the operator, the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, at all times.

Details of incidents at such establishments having significance or potential significance for the health and safety of the work force or the general public, are provided by the operator to the Health and Safety Executive and to interested Departments and their respective Ministers. This is done in accordance with the incident reporting criteria set out in the statement made in this House on 30 April 1987 by the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy, the hon. Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad).

In the event of an incident in Scotland with potential off-site consequences there are comprehensive plans available which would be invoked if necessary. Within those general arrangements the Scottish Office would become the lead Department.

There was no danger to either the work force or to the general public from the incident at Dounreay on 24 April.

EMPLOYMENT

Training

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate for each of the periods 1 April 1989 to 31 March 1990 and 1 April 1990 to 31 March 1991 of the average amount per place of employer contribution for ET and for YTS.

Mr. Nicholls: The Government do not publish estimates of the average employer contribution per place.

The level of contribution will justifiably vary between employers, trainees and types of provider and contributions are made in a variety of ways, for example sponsorship, support in kind and payments for work experience provision.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give, based on the information given in the public expenditure White Paper (Cm. 1006), the estimated total percentage of all employment training leavers going into jobs, further education, or training and self-employment in 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Nicholls *[holding answer 3 May 1990]:* The estimated percentage of all employment training leavers going into jobs, self-employment, further education or training is as follows:

	Per cent.
1990-91	44
1991-92	48
1992-93	51

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the actual spend and the budgeted spend in the standard regions on employment training for 1989-90.

Mr. Nicholls: Provisional outturn expenditure in 1989-90 on employment training (ET) for each region is shown in the table. Information on budgets is for internal management purposes.

	£ millions
South East	31·21
London	46·11
South West	25·60
West Midlands	43·23
East Midlands and Eastern	33·08
Yorkshire and Humberside	50·97

	£ millions
North West	56·11
Northern	42·10
Wales	32·74
Scotland	60·70
National Providers Unit	109·30

Note: These figures exclude expenditure on trainee allowances and other centrally administered ET expenditure.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, for each region, and for Great Britain, for each month since October 1988, what was the number of entrants to *(a)* job clubs, *(b)* employment training, *(c)* restart courses, and *(d)* enterprise allowance scheme.

Mr. Eggar: The information for *(b)* and *(d)* is given in the following tables. As parts *(a)* and *(c)* of the question refer to programmes under the operational control of the employment service, Mr. Mike Fogden, the chief executive of the employment service, will be replying in writing to the hon. Lady.

Numbers starting employment training with training managers: October 1988 to March 1990
Training agency regions of England

	1988		
	October	*November*	*December*
South East	2,100	2,000	1,700
London	3,100	3,100	2,400
South West	1,700	2,000	1,700
West Midlands	3,700	3,800	3,300
East Midlands and Eastern	2,700	2,900	2,200
Yorkshire and Humberside	4,500	5,500	4,400
North West	5,000	5,500	4,100
Northern	3,200	3,600	2,900
Wales	2,000	2,700	2,200
Scotland	3,100	4,100	3,900
Great Britain	31,100	35,200	28,900

Training agency regions of England

	South East	*London*	*South West*	*West Midlands*	*East Midlands and Eastern*	*Yorkshire and Humberside*	*North West*	*Northern*	*Wales*	*Scotland*	*Great Britain*[1]
1989											
January	2,300	3,800	2,100	4,300	2,900	5,500	5,500	3,600	2,900	3,700	36,700
February	2,500	3,400	2,500	5,000	3,600	6,100	7,100	4,800	3,600	5,400	43,900
March	2,100	3,800	2,300	4,900	3,200	5,400	6,500	4,700	3,200	6,000	42,200
April	2,300	3,100	2,000	4,100	3,100	4,900	5,800	3,800	2,900	4,400	36,300
May	1,600	2,600	1,700	3,300	2,400	4,100	4,800	3,200	2,300	4,400	30,000
June	2,400	3,100	1,900	3,800	2,800	4,500	6,300	4,100	2,600	4,800	36,400
July	4,500	3,100	1,500	3,300	3,000	3,800	5,300	3,600	2,700	3,400	34,200
August	1,900	2,700	1,200	3,200	2,500	3,500	4,500	3,000	2,300	4,500	29,300
September	3,400	4,800	2,300	4,500	3,500	5,500	6,200	4,900	3,700	5,600	44,200
October	2,500	3,200	1,900	3,800	2,800	4,600	5,200	3,700	2,900	4,800	35,600
November	2,300	3,600	1,700	3,800	2,800	4,800	5,600	3,700	2,400	4,900	36,200
December	1,500	2,600	1,400	2,900	2,100	3,700	3,700	2,900	1,900	3,500	26,300

[1] Great Britain total includes small number of trainees at Residential Training Colleges and Large Contractors not included in regional figures.

Training agency regions of England

	1990		
	January	*February*	*March*
South East	2,800	2,600	3,300
London	3,900	4,100	4,500
South West	2,000	1,800	2,500
West Midlands	3,600	4,500	5,300
East Midlands and Eastern	2,500	3,100	3,700
Yorkshire and Humberside	4,400	5,100	6,100
North West	5,400	5,900	7,300
Northern	3,300	4,100	4,900
Wales	2,500	3,100	3,400
Scotland	3,900	5,300	6,300
Great Britain[1]	34,400	39,600	47,300

[1] Great Britain total includes small number of trainees at Residential Training Colleges and Large Contractors not included in regional figures.

Entrants to the enterprise allowance scheme: October 1988 to April 1990
Training agency regions of England

	London	*South East*	*South West*	*West Midlands*	*East Midlands*	*North West*	*North*	*Yorkshire and Humberside*	*Wales*	*Scotland*	*Great Britain*
1988											
October	896	811	763	790	675	1,211	452	777	502	639	7,516
November	1,015	812	809	881	721	1,303	465	739	601	648	7,994
December	820	769	690	657	693	1,139	391	774	513	542	6,988
1989											
January	748	658	653	592	627	884	343	629	444	453	6,031
February	828	768	768	697	673	1,106	429	678	542	622	7,111
March	891	782	788	792	770	1,209	482	763	574	680	7,731
April	758	746	745	743	721	1,123	514	719	520	649	7,238
May	904	887	920	878	884	1,426	542	948	644	795	8,828
June	675	608	643	669	667	1,039	440	634	439	594	6,408

	London	South East	South West	West Midlands	East Midlands	North West	North	Yorkshire and Humberside	Wales	Scotland	Great Britain
July	830	828	686	785	823	1,164	507	723	606	695	7,647
August	664	602	543	512	532	891	385	627	382	497	5,635
September	699	614	529	580	532	952	380	571	405	541	5,773
October	882	797	615	788	822	1,279	446	900	528	674	7,731
November	827	635	529	609	643	1,003	397	713	450	510	6,313
December	728	708	605	600	592	899	370	673	431	608	6,214
1990											
January	636	539	493	377	509	731	249	491	310	385	4,720
February	672	643	513	558	527	832	313	537	353	495	5,443
March	706	646	550	611	631	908	342	636	382	524	5,936
April	663	655	564	590	694	940	351	563	440	628	6,088

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, for each region, and for Great Britain, how many *(a)* employment training agents there are and how many have got through either stage one or stage two of the ATO process *(b)* employment training managers there are, and how many have got through either stage one or two of the ATO process and *(c)* youth training managing agents there are and how many have got through either stage one or stage two of the ATO process.

Mr. Nicholls: Information on the numbers of employment training agents by region who have achieved approved training organisation status, stage one and stage two at 30 April 1990 is given in table 1. Table 2 shows similar information for training managers. Area offices and training and enterprise councils hold details of YT managing agents and ET training agents and training managers with whom they have contracted. To obtain the information would incur disproportionate cost.

Table 1

Training Agents

	Total who have achieved stage I at 30 April 1990
Scotland	18
Northern	13
North West	22
Yorkshire and Humberside	15
Wales	9
West Midlands	15
East Midlands	10
South West	9
South East	25
London	17
Great Britain total	153

Note: There are no stage II completions for training agents at 30 March 1990.

Table 2

Training Managers

	Total who have achieved ATO stage I at 30 April 1990	*Total who have achieved ATO stage II at 30 April 1990*
Scotland	157	—
Northern	90	—
North West	117	—
Yorkshire and Humberside	105	1
Wales	94	—
West Midlands	68	1
East Midlands	77	1
South West	47	—
South East	56	—
London	47	—
RTC Unit	15	—
ET LCU		
Great Britain total	873	3

RTC—Residential training college
LCU—Large contractors unit

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the number of contracts with training providers under the employment training scheme which have been re-negotiated, broken down by the standard regions.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much notice was given to employment training providers by the Training Agency concerning the end of existing contracts.

Mr. Nicholls: As required by contract, at least four weeks' notice in writing was given to all employment training providers concerning termination of agreements.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether training and enterprise councils or employment training training managers are empowered to alter the child care payments being paid to single parents who have already started their training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Training and enterprise councils and area offices of the Training Agency have discretion over the means of providing child care support, but they must ensure that the costs of caring for children under 16 are met for lone parents on employment training.

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he intends to designate employment training as an approved training scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: My Department has no plans to designate employment training as an approved training scheme. About 670,000 unemployed people to date have taken advantage of the help it offers them to obtain the skills and experience they need to get jobs.

Action for Jobs

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much of the total expenditure on the action for jobs campaign in 1987-88 was spent on *(a)* press advertising, *(b)* radio advertising, *(c)* outdoor advertising, *(d)* exhibition material and *(e)* research.

Mr. Eggar: A total of £820,000 was spent on press advertising on the action for jobs campaign in 1987-88; £194,000 was spent on radio advertising; £1,380,000 was spent on outdoor advertising; £500,000 on exhibition material; and £6,000 on research.

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the main headings of expenditure on action for jobs, in addition to expenditure on television advertising and printed material, in 1986-87.

Mr. Eggar: The main headings of expenditure on action for jobs in 1986-87, in addition to expenditure on television advertising and printed material, were press, radio and outdoor advertising, presentations, exhibition material and research.

Compact Scheme

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the progress of the compact scheme.

Mr. Eggar: Excellent progress has been made since the launch of the initiative in 1988, when the Government announced funding for 15 inner-city compacts.

Local education/business partnerships have shown considerable interest in the initiative and as a result 40 compacts had been granted funding by the end of 1989. Given this success my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State announced in January 1990, that funding would be made available for compacts to be developed in all the remaining urban programme authority (UPA) inner-city areas from April this year.

There are now 29 operational compacts and 20 under development. A further eight are about to commence development. A full list is given in the table.

Information from the operational compacts show that the initiative is receiving a great deal of support:

4,000 employers and training organisations are actively involved in compact activities and committing some 20,000 jobs with training to those young people who meet their goals.

230 schools are participating and 40,000 young people have signed their compact agreement.

In 1989 over £3 million was contributed by employers, education authorities and others to match Government funding.

The initiative has shown clearly what can be achieved by local compact partnership. This will be further enhanced by the advent of training and enterprise councils (TECs) which will progressively take over responsibility for compacts arrangements (where the education partners agree).

Operational Compacts

Birmingham
Blackburn
Bolton
Bristol
Cleveland
Coventry
Doncaster
Dudley
East London
Hull
Kirklees
Leeds
Leicester
Liverpool
Manchester
Newham
North London
Rochdale
Salford
Sheffield
South East London
Walsall
West London
Wolverhampton
Wrekin

Scotland

Clydebank
Dundee
Edinburgh
Glasgow

Development Compacts

Barnsley
Bradford
Burnley
Halton
Haringey
Knowsley
Lambeth
Plymouth
Preston
Rotherham
Sefton (Bootle)
South London
Tyneside (Newcastle/Gateshead)
Wandsworth
Wigan

Wales

Clwyd
Mid Glamorgan
West Glamorgan
South Glamorgan

Scotland

UPAs/Priority area not covered by a compact

England

Brent
Derby
North Tyneside
Oldham
South Tyneside
St. Helens
Sunderland
Wirral

Scotland

Coatbridge
Inverclyde
Motherwell

Labour Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a table showing employment in manufacturing industry by standard economic region in Great Britain and for each Welsh county for each year since 1979, each quarter of 1989; and the first quarter of the current year.

Mr. Nicholls: Table 1 shows employees in employment for each of the standard regions in Great Britain up to December 1989, the latest date for which information is available.

Figures for the counties are available only from censuses of employment taken in 1981, 1984 and 1987 and are given in table 2.

Table 1
Employees in employment in the manufacturing industry[1] for each of the standard regions of Great Britain

(Thousands)

	South East	Greater London	East Anglia	South West	West Midlands	East Midlands	Yorkshire and Humberside	North West	North	Wales	Scotland	Great Britain (sum of regions)
June 1979	1,871	n/a	206	439	985	606	708	971	410	315	604	7,115
June 1980	1,820	n/a	203	427	933	582	669	931	387	290	564	6,806
June 1981	1,684	n/a	185	397	817	532	583	810	339	240	510	6,099
June 1982	1,604	649	180	385	757	514	542	744	321	226	477	5,751
June 1983	1,533	609	178	366	713	485	500	694	291	213	444	5,418
June 1984	1,483	573	185	373	706	482	481	669	277	212	434	5,301
June 1985	1,447	539	184	375	693	487	480	664	278	211	433	5,254
June 1986	1,390	506	178	367	673	487	476	653	272	210	416	5,122
June 1987	1,340	465	174	367	663	483	471	657	272	217	407	5,049
June 1988	1,329	452	179	370	667	491	485	673	279	233	409	5,116
March 1989	1,321	437	180	371	669	491	485	681	282	241	418	5,141
June 1989	1,319	442	176	369	668	493	484	678	283	243	416	5,128
September 1989	1,316	432	179	376	673	503	490	686	290	250	423	5,185
December 1989	1,308	426	178	376	667	499	487	685	291	250	424	5,165

The figures are unadjusted for seasonal variations.
[1] Standard Industrial Classification 1980 Division 2-4.

Table 2
Employees in employment in the manufacturing industries[1] in counties of Wales[2]

Thousands

	September		
	1981	*1984*	*1987*
Clwyd	33·7	35·2	39·1
Dyfed	17·1	15·9	14·5
Gwent	52·8	46·1	49·1
Gwynedd	11·5	9·3	10·4
Mid Glamorgan	52·5	44·7	52·1
Powys	7·0	6·9	8·4
South Glamorgan	26·6	25·2	22·8
West Glamorgan	36·9	28·8	27·9

[1] Standard Industrial Classification 1980 Division 2-4.
[2] Counties are defined in terms of ward boundaries as at September 1981.

Wages (Underpayment)

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will name the employers in each year since 1979 who have been prosecuted for contravention of wages council legislation, specifying the contravention in each case, and, where the prosecution occurred for underpayment of wages council rates, if he will specify the hourly rates paid to the affected employees.

Mr. Nicholls: I will write to the hon. Member with the information requested.

Industrial Accidents

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give for the last year for which figures are available for the age groups *(a)* below 19 years, *(b)* 20 to 29 years, *(c)* 30 to 39 years, *(d)* 40 to 49 years and *(e)* over 50 years information regarding industrial accidents on (i) the number of people injured or killed, (ii) the number of deaths and injuries per 1,000 people in each age group and (iii) the ratio of deaths to injuries in each age group.

Mr. Nicholls: The available information is given in the table.

Injuries to employees reported to HSE's factory and agricultural inspectorates and local authorities, 1988-89[3]

Age of injured person	Fatal No.	Fatal Rate[1]	Major No.	Major Rate[1]	Over 3 day No.	Over 3 day Rate[1]	Ratio of fatal to other injuries
Under 16	—	n/a	22	n/a	40	n/a	—
16-19	25	0·01	1,686	0·83	9,071	4·47	1:430
20-24	37	0·01	2,209	0·72	18,499	6·06	1:560
25-34	48	[2]—	3,609	0·67	35,986	6·70	1:825
35-44	61	0·01	3,346	0·64	31,332	6·04	1:568
45-54	56	0·01	3,324	0·83	26,239	6·57	1:528
55-59	30	0·02	1,550	1·02	10,104	6·68	1:388
60-64	28	0·03	817	1·01	5,246	6·49	1:217
65+	4	0·01	103	0·36	166	0·59	1:67
Not known	13	n/a	1,571	n/a	9,091	n/a	1:820
Total	302	0·01	18,237	0·82	145,774	6·55	1:543

[1] Rate per 1,000 employees.
[2] Rate less than 0·01.
[3] Provisional.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many deaths due to industrial accidents occurred on each day of the week, in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Nicholls: The available information for the year beginning 1 April 1988 is provided in the table:

Fatal injuries resulting from work activity reported[1] to enforcing authorities[2]

Day of week	*Numbers*
Sunday	37
Monday	83
Tuesday	79
Wednesday[3]	262
Thursday	103
Friday	99
Saturday	50

[1]Fatal injuries to employees, self-employed persons and non-employed persons injured as a result of work activity as reported under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations, 1985.

[2]Includes injuries reported to all HSC/E enforcing authorities.

[3]Includes the 167 fatalities of the Piper Alpha disaster. Without Piper Alpha the figure would be 95.

Part-time Workers

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the changes in employment law which have affected part-time workers' employment rights; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: Changes made to individual employment rights since 1979, which have affected both part-time and full-time employees, are as follows:

qualifying period on unfair dismissal increased progressively from 26 weeks to two years;

qualifying period for written reasons for dismissal increased from 26 weeks to two years;

dismissal for non-membership of a trade union made automatically unfair in all circumstances;

maternity provisions amended to strengthen notification requirements, exempt very small firms in certain circumstances, and introduce a new right to time off for ante-natal care;

industrial tribunal procedures amended to provide for pre-hearing assessments and power to introduce pre-hearing reviews and require deposits; widen rule on award of costs; remove requirement to provide written reasons for decisions in all cases; amend provisions on the basic award; change the onus of proof for unfair dismissal; and require tribunals to take into account the size and administrative resources of the employer;

paid time off for trade union officials restricted to duties in respect of which the union is recognised;

guarantee pay provisions changed from fixed to rolling quarters;

employers with less than 20 employees exempted from the requirement to provide note on disciplinary rules.

Workfare

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he intends to commission a feasibility study on the possibility of introducing a workfare system for dealing with the long-term unemployed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My Department is constantly looking for ways of improving the effectiveness of its measures to help long-term unemployed people back to work. As part of that process we announced recently a number of changes which will extend and improve the employment service's present system of offering counselling and advice to unemployed people. My right hon. and learned Friend also announced to the House on 11 May our intention to introduce regulations later this year which will enable employment service staff to require the attendance at a restart course of those who have been unemployed for two years or more and who refuse to participate in any of my Department's employment and training programmes. We shall continue to keep all these measures under review.

Repetitive Strain Injury

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what research his Department is doing or commissioning into the problems of repetitive strain injury.

Mr. Nicholls: The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) supported a major study at the Institute of Occupational Medicine (IOM) in Edinburgh, whose report can be found in the Library, deposited paper No. 5131. It has funded a further study by the institute which aims to produce an ergometric guide or assessment aid to enable non-experts to identify work activities which may lead to upper limb disorders. A report is expected in July.

The Health and Safety Executive has also funded a study by the university of Birmingham, which attempts to link specific upper limb disorders to particular work routines, to analyse these routines and to evaluate methods aimed at prevention. The report is still awaited.

The Health and Safety Executive intends to follow up this work by commissioning further studies to investigate repetitive strain injuries in specific occupational groups, and is currently negotiating with the Institute of Occupational Medicine to carry out a study of keyboard users.

In addition to these extra-mural studies the Health and Safety Executive is itself carrying out a wide-ranging study of musculo-skeletal symptoms in supermarket cashier operators.

Earnings Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside, 11 May, *Official Report*, column *270*, on adult earnings, if he will make a statement on the criteria he uses in answering questions from hon. Members regarding earnings statistics.

Mr. Nicholls: When the information available to answer a question on earnings has already been published, it is the long-standing practice to refer the hon. Member to that source. The source publication referred to for earnings questions is predominantly but not exclusively the annual new earnings survey report.

VDUs

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the present analysis of the potential health implications resulting from prolonged exposure to VDUs.

Mr. Nicholls: Visual display units in themselves are not a hazard to health. Prolonged work at a VDU can cause some people to experience problems such as headaches,

temporary eyestrain, or pain and sometimes disorder in the hands and arms; but none of these are specific to VDU work. They can be avoided by ergonomic design of furniture, equipment and lighting; and by good design of work tasks to allow changes of activity and avoid prolonged spells without changes in posture.

Youth Training Allowances

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what would be the real value of the youth training allowances for 16 and 17-year-olds if they had been raised by *(a)* the rise in the retail prices index and *(b)* the rise in average earnings since their introduction as the YOP allowance in April 1978; when was the last rise in the allowances; what plans he has for further rises; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The weekly allowance paid to young people on the youth opportunities programme (YOP) in April 1978 was £19·50, equivalent to £49·45 if adjusted for changes in the retail prices index and equivalent to £63·48 if adjusted for changes in the index of average earnings.

The lower level of the youth training allowance—£29·50 per week—was set in July 1988. The higher level of the youth training allowance has remained unchanged since it was set in April 1986. There are no plans to increase these training allowances, but from the introduction of youth training on 29 May, young people will receive the higher level of allowance from their 17th birthday rather than on completing a year of training, so that most young people will receive the higher level earlier in their training.

YTS and—especially—youth training, incorporates substantially higher quality training than YOP. In contrast with YOP, youth training will provide all trainees with the opportunity to obtain a recognised vocational qualification. It is therefore misleading to compare the values of the YOP and YTS youth training allowances, which reflect the fact that trainees are still learning.

Increasing numbers of employers have been supplementing the minimum trainee allowances and many trainees are now in receipt of more than the minimum. Many are also employed, and receiving wages.

Footwear and Textile Industries

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 3 May, *Official Report*, column *638*, on employment in the footwear and textile industries, if he will break down the figures by region; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not available.

Skill Centres

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the price received for the 27 skill centre sites sold to Astra Training Services Ltd.; what conditions are imposed on the sale; and how he applied the provisions of appendix IV, principal lease terms, of the information memorandum issued by Deloitte Corporate Finance on his behalf.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 15 May 1990]:* The sale of the skill centre sites to Astra Training Services Ltd. formed part of the overall sale package, which will involve a payment from the Government to Astra of some £11 million. My right hon. and learned Friend gave details to the House on 13 February 1990 at column 144 of the conditions that would apply to the sale in respect of any development gains made by Astra.

My sale advisers took full account of the principal lease terms set out in appendix IV of the information memorandum in their negotiations with successful bidders.

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement about the sale of the Liverpool skill centre to METEL; and what information he has on the decision to make redundant all the staff transferred from the Skills Training Agency.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 22 May 1990]:* The sale of the training business at Liverpool skill centre to Merseyside Education Training Enterprise Limited (METEL) was negotiated in good faith and completed on 14 May. I regret the decision of METEL to make staff from the skill centre redundant. My Department has given support to its former employees by offering them access to legal advice on the severance terms being offered by METEL.

Action Credit

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the employers involved in the three action credit pilot schemes and provide the lowest, highest, and median hourly rates of pay to participants in each of the three pilots.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 18 May 1990]:* This information is not available.

Ticket Touts

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has any plans to make the resale of tickets at pop concerts by touts unlawful; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I have been asked to reply.

We have no such plans to make unlawful the activities of ticket touts at pop concerts. The tout pays the asking price for tickets, so the ticket seller does not lose and the person purchasing a ticket from the tout is willing to pay above its face value in order to obtain it.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Private Medical Services

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security why his Department has employed AMI Healthcare Group to carry out medical health checks of staff at some benefit offices; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The health screening is a three-month pilot exercise to assess the costs and benefits of this provision for staff. AMI Healthcare Group was selected from a number of leading companies in the field of corporate health screening invited to submit tenders.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list his Department's benefit and other

offices where the AMI Healthcare Group is carrying out medical health checks on the staff; what is the cost to his Department per individual; and what is the total cost to his Department.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The estimated 3,000 members of staff participating in the health screening exercise are from our local offices at Ayr, Basildon, Devonport, Edmonton, Gateshead, Glasgow (Springburn), Hull (West), Manchester (Sale), Mansfield, Norwich (Mountergate), Poole, Rotherham (South), St. Helens, Southampton, Telford, Worcester, central offices at Blackpool and Newcastle, the Information Technology Services Agency at Lytham St. Annes, the London South regional office and London headquarters offices. To disclose the costs of the exercise at this stage would prejudice competition should there be negotiations with other companies following an assessment of the results of the pilot programme.

War Disablement Pension

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average length of time for the determination of an application for war disablement pension; and what is the reason for the delay after notifying the applicant that the injury has been accepted before a final decision is made.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The average length of time for the determination of a claim for a war disablement pension is about 36 weeks. The notification to a claimant that an injury has been accepted as attributable to or aggravated by service is normally in effect the final decision on the claim. If my hon. Friend has a particular case in mind I should be pleased to look into it.

Disablement Allowance

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has considered the effect of the introduction of the age-related addition in severe disablement allowance on 16 and 17-year-olds in receipt of income support; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Nearly 9,000 16 and 17-year-olds were receiving severe disablement allowance in April 1988. It is estimated that about 4,000 who will qualify for the age addition in December will no longer need to be dependent on income support.

Community Charge

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the level of net income at which full community charge becomes payable for people earning *(a)* £310 per week, *(b)* £320 per week, *(c)* £325 per week, *(d)* £345 per week, *(e)* £355 per week, *(f)* £360 per week, *(g)* £385 per week, *(h)* £390 per week, *(i)* £415 per week, *(j)* £420 per week, *(k)* £430 per week, *(l)* £435 per week and *(m)* £440 per week *(w)* for a single person (i) under 25 years, (ii) over 25 years, (iii) 60 to 75 years, (iv) 75 to 80 years and (v) over 80 years, and *(x)* married couples with (i) no children, (ii) two children under 11 years and (iii) one child under 11 years and one aged 11 to 15 years, *(y)* a pensioner couple aged under 75 years and *(z)* a lone parent with (i) one child under 11 years and (ii) two children under 11 years.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The hon. Member's question cannot be answered because the level of net income at which full community charge becomes payable also depends upon the level of the community charge set by the local authority. The question does not specify any level for the community charge.

Practitioners' Handbook

Mr. Hayes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will place any recent amendments to the delegated medical practitioners' handbook in the Library.

Mr. Scott: I have today placed in the Library copies of amendments made to the handbook for delegated medical practitioners since it was published in 1988. The handbook contains guidance for doctors who decide on behalf of the attendance allowance board whether the attendance needs criteria are met for payment of attendance allowance. I understand that the board intends to reissue the handbook later this year.

Cash Limits

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether there have been any changes to the cash limits or running costs limit of his Department for 1990-91.

Mr. Scott: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class XIV, vote 7 (administration and miscellaneous services) will be increased by £3,080,000 from £1,703,179,000 to £1,706,259,000. The revision takes account of the work involved in the change to capital limits announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Budget statement (£4,520,000); increased activity in the recovery of maintenance payments from liable relatives (£6,750,000); a transfer to the Department of Health (class XIII, vote 3) of £3,561,000; a transfer from Lord Chancellor's Department (class X, vote 1) of £103,000; a transfer from Treasury Solicitors Department (class X, vote 9) of £47,000 and a transfer from Department of the Environment (property holdings) (class VIII, vote 7) of £1,500,000. The additional requirements are partially offset by an increase in receipts from the national insurance fund to the vote of £6,279,000. The balance will be charged to the reserve and will therefore not add to the planned total of public expenditure. As a result of the changes the running costs limit of the Department of Social Security is increased by £7,859,000 from £1,922,467,000 to £1,930,326,000.

Pension Arrears

Mr. Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security for what reason his Department has not paid over to a constituent of the right hon. Member for Woking the arrears of pension remitted to it from France on 31 October 1989, under the Department's reference 3392/AA229393A/OVB A3P.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Department has been unable to trace any record of receipt of arrears of French pension which the French authorities state was sent on 9 or 31 October 1989. Inquiries are continuing but in the meantime arrangements are being made, exceptionally, to

pay the pensioner the sum estimated to be due to her after adjustment to take account of other benefit paid to her over the period covered by the arrears.

Part-time Students

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) whether unemployed claimants who are solely in receipt of unemployment benefit and are available for and actively seeking work can study part time on courses of advanced education and higher education; and if he will make a statement;

(2) whether unemployed claimants who are on income support and available for and actively seeking work can study part time on courses of advanced education; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Yes. Claimants may continue to receive both unemployment benefit and income support whilst studying part time provided they satisfy the availability for work and actively seeking work conditions.

Pneumoconiosis

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people have been awarded disablement benefit arising from pneumoconiosis (D1) in each year; and how many people had their claim for disablement benefit dismissed because it was decided that they do not suffer from pneumoconiosis in each year.

Mr. Scott: The available information is set out in the table:

D1 pneumoconiosis: diagnoses by special medical boards

	Boarding excluding reassessments	*Diagnosed*	*Not diagnosed*
1989	1,940	661	1,279
1988	1,929	562	1,367
1987	1,996	652	1,344
1986	2,336	747	1,589
1985	2,300	702	1,598

Social Fund

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the cost to his Department of the publication of leaflet SFL10 from March 1990: and how many copies of the leaflet were produced.

Mr. Scott: The cost to the Department of the publication of leaflet SFL10 ("Have you been refused a Social Fund Loan or Grant? A recent High Court decision may affect you") since March 1990 has been £5,900. Six hundred thousand copies have been produced.

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many 16 and 17-year-olds have received payments from the social fund for each quarter since April 1988 and for each standard region.

Mr. Scott: I regret that the information requested is not available and could be obtained only at a disproportionate cost.

Asbestosis

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people have been awarded disablement benefit arising from asbestosis in each available year; and how many people have been refused disablement benefit because it has been decided that they do not suffer from asbestosis in each year.

Mr. Scott: Asbestosis is not itself a prescribed disease, but falls within the definition of pneumoconiosis—fibrosis of the lungs due to silica dust, asbestos dust or other dust. The numbers of claims for pneumoconiosis arising out of employment in the asbestos industry which were referred to special medical boards in the years 1985 to 1989, are set out in the table.

Pneumoconiosis in the asbestos industry

	References (excluding re-assessments)	*Diagnosed*	*Not diagnosed*
1989	741	268	473
1988	688	202	486
1987	758	247	511
1986	926	312	614
1985	748	273	475

Severe Disability Premium

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants have received a lump sum backdated payment of severe disability premium; and when such payments were made *(a)* for each standard region and *(b)* for each Merseyside office.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: This information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Independent Living Fund

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he last met the trustees of the independent living fund; and what was the outcome of the discussions.

Mr. Scott: I met the trustees of the independent living fund on 5 April 1990. At that meeting the trustees agreed to write to me outlining their proposals for the fund's operation during 1990-91.

Household Statistics

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a list of the dates on which the low-income family, households below average income statistics have been published since May 1979, indicating the year to which the statistics refer.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information available is in the table:

Publication date	*Years covered*
Low income families	
7 April 1982 (revised 20 July 1982)	1975, 1976, 1977, 1979
24 October 1983	1977, 1979, 1981
25 July 1986	1979, 1981, 1983
19 May 1988	1981, 1983, 1985
Households below average income	
19 May 1988	1981, 1983, 1985

Retirement Pensions

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what would be the additional cost, net of savings in other benefits, of reducing the male state

retirement pension age to 64, 63, 62, 61 and to 60 years *(a)* on the basis of current male contributor dependant and survivor benefit rights and *(b)* on the basis that male contributors receive the same dependant and survivor rights as female contributors do currently;

(2) what would be the saving, net of additional costs in other benefits, of increasing the female state retirement pension to 61, 62, 63, 64 and 65 years *(a)* on the basis of current female contributor dependant and survivor rights and *(b)* on the basis that female contributors receive the same dependant and survivor rights as male contributors do currently.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information is not available in the form requested.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the number of women pensioners and the proportion of total women pensioners, who receive a reduced pension as a result of the married woman's half test.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Complete figures are not available in the form requested. The latest available figures show that on 31 March 1989 there were 6·11 million women pensioners in Great Britain.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security at what age the state retirement pension age could be equalised at nil additional cost taking savings in other benefits into account.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Information is not available in the precise form requested. The latest available figures based on 1985-86 benefit rates are that the cost of equalisation at age 63 is £800 million while at age 65 there is a saving of £500 million.

Community Charge Benefit

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to take steps to help pensioners presently disqualified from community charge benefit due to *(a)* receipt of an occupational pension or *(b)* the tariff income rules on savings above £3,000; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We have no such plans. It is a common feature of all income-related benefits, including community charge benefit, that income from occupational pensions and any tariff income from savings is counted as income when benefit claims are assessed. This approach achieves the Government's policy of targeting help on those who need it most.

Sheltered Placement Scheme

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he plans to increase in 1991 the number of disabled people employed as a result of the sheltered placement scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

The sheltered placement scheme is the responsibility of my Department. The Department is committed to support for the scheme and will be reviewing, later in the year, the arrangements for funding in the context of the Department's expenditure plans.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Ulster Defence Regiment

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many of the 28 members of the Ulster Defence Regiment who were arrested during an operation on 9 October 1989 have been charged with firearms offences; and what form of apology has been given to those who were not charged.

Mr. Cope: All police operations in the Province are the responsibility of the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and he has informed us that nine members of the Ulster Defence Regiment were charged with 11 firearms offences. I know of no apology issued to those who were not charged.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what statements were issued following the arrest of 28 Ulster Defence Regiment soldiers on 9 October 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: I understand that 25 members of the Ulster Defence Regiment were arrested on 8 October 1990 and a further three on 9 October. Deputy Chief Constable Stevens issued a statement on 8 October and a further one on 13 October.

Stevens Inquiry

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether any assurances have been sought or given to the Government of the Irish Republic concerning bail conditions for those charged by the Stevens team.

Mr. Cope: The Irish Government have not sought any assurances concerning bail conditions for those charged in connection with the Stevens inquiry, and none has been given.

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what consultations there have been in the inter-governmental conference under the Anglo-Irish Agreement with the Government of the Irish Republic concerning the Stevens inquiry team.

Mr. Cope: There have been no consultations with the Irish Government concerning the staff seconded to the Stevens inquiry.

Hospitals

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the gross expenditure for hospital purposes by each of the health and social services boards in Northern Ireland for 1989-90; what is the allocation to each for such purposes for 1990-91; and if he will express all such figures in terms of per capita spending in each board area.

Mr. Needham: The information for 1988-89, the latest year available, is as follows:

	Hospital Gross Revenue Expenditure £	Population Figures[1]	Expenditure Per Capita £
Northern Board	61,944,350	384,300	161·19
Southern Board	65,403,315	289,800	225·68
Eastern Board	244,551,304	645,200	379·03
Western Board	64,333,977	258,800	248·59

[1]These are the resident populations within each board area. No adjustment has been made for patients who, while being resident within one board area, receive hospital treatment within another board area (cross-boundary flows). This happens, for example, in the provision of regional specialties by the Eastern board.

Information is not held centrally on the amount each board will allocate to hospital services for 1990-91. Allocations to the health and social services boards are made by the Department of Health and Social Services on a block basis and it is a matter for each board to arrange its services, commensurate with regional strategic priorities.

Police Pay

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details of the annual pay rates for *(a)* a Royal Ulster Constabulary constable after two years' service and *(b)* a Royal Ulster Constabulary reserve constable after two years' service.

Mr. Cope: The annual rate of pay for a constable with two years' service in both the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the full-time reserve is £12,462. A constable in the Royal Ulster Constabulary part-time reserve is paid on an hourly basis according to the hours of duty actually performed.

Security

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details of the number of arms, explosives and other equipment captured by the security forces since 1 January.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 10 May 1990]:* During the first quarter of 1990 a total of 63 firearms and 3,388 lbs of explosives were found by the police and Army. Other finds included 7,038 rounds of ammunition, 66 detonators, seven rocket/mortar launchers and seven rocket/rounds.

Investment

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to encourage American companies to invest in the constituency of Newry and Armagh.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 21 May 1990]:* The Industrial Development Board is currently intensifying its efforts to attract industry from the United States, with the establishment of an independent representational network. We are already beginning to see an encouraging flow of new projects. I am undertaking a programme of visits to the United States, in some cases with the support of local politicians, and will be actively promoting the Newry and Armagh areas as prime locations within Northern Ireland. As the hon. Gentleman knows, we have also had discussions with representatives of the local community and are prepared to consider close co-operation between local representatives and Government Departments and their agencies in order to encourage industrial development and economic regeneration.

Registered Child Minders

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many registered child minders there are in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 22 May 1990]:* The latest published statistics show that the number of registered child minders in Northern Ireland, as at 31 December 1987, was 2,729. The provisional figure for 31 March 1989 is 3,091.

BPA Deprivation Supplement

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what areas listed in the deprivation supplement to the basic practice allowance are covered by those designations which do not refer to electoral wards; and what are the criteria for selecting areas other than strictly by electoral ward.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 23 May 1990]:* None. All the areas designated are based on electoral wards.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the deprivation supplement to BPA in Northern Ireland as to why a proposed formula and area list circulated among general practitioners prior to the contract date was withdrawn; and what are the differences between that formula and list and those which have now been decided.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 23 May 1990]:* Following consultations with the General Medical Services Committee (Northern Ireland) agreement was reached on 25 January 1990 on an index of deprivation to be used to calculate the deprivation supplement to BPA. Subsequently representations were made to the Department of Health and Social Services that the index could operate unfairly in Northern Ireland because variables for the "under fives" and "unskilled working population" had been omitted. These groups had been subject to under-enumeration in the 1981 census. An exercise to refine the Northern Ireland index was carried out. This exercise has been completed and agreement on a revised index using other sources of data was reached on 25 April with GMSC(NI). The variables used in both indices were:

Original index Per cent.	Revised index Per cent.
Unemployment	Unemployment
Elderly living alone	Elderly living alone
Single parents	Single parents
Overcrowded households	Overcrowded households
Households lacking one or more amenities	Households lacking one or more amenities
—	Under-5s
—	Unskilled
—	Moved House

The following table lists the electoral wards included under each index:

Original index		*Revised index*	
High		*High*	
Londonderry	St. Columb's Wells	Belfast	Cromac
Belfast	Falls	Belfast	Shankill
Belfast	Shankill	Belfast	Court
Belfast	Ballymacarrett	Belfast	New Lodge
Belfast	New Lodge	Belfast	Strabane East
Belfast	Clonard	Belfast	Falls
Belfast	Cromac	Belfast	Ballymacarrett
Belfast	North Howard	Belfast	Strabane West
Belfast	Central	Belfast	Grosvenor
—	—	Belfast	The Mount
Medium		*Medium*	
Belfast	Court	Belfast	North Howard
Belfast	The Mount	Londonderry	St. Columb's Wells
Belfast	Island	Belfast	St. George's
Cookstown	Ardboe	Cookstown	Ardboe
Newry and Mourne	Crossmaglen	Moyle	Glenaan
Dungannon	Washing Bay	Newry and Mourne	Creggan
Londonderry	Creggan South	Belfast	Island
Belfast	Whiterock	Moyle	Bushmills
Belfast	Woodvale	Belfast	Clonard
Belfast	Duncairn	Belfast	Crumlin
Belfast	Donegal	Limavady	Coolessan
Moyle	Ballintoy	Belfast	Woodvale
Dungannon	Killymaddy	Newry and Mourne	Crossmaglen
Moyle	Glenaan	Armagh	Lurgyvallen
Londonderry	Brandywell	Belfast	Ardoyne
Strabane	Glenderg	Newry and Mourne	Forkhill
Magherafelt	Lower Glenshane	Armagh	Keady
Omagh	Drumquin	Londonderry	Shantallow
Moyle	Knocklayd	—	—
Dungannon	Coalisland North	—	—
Newry and Mourne	Forkhill	—	—
Magherafelt	Gulladuff	—	—
Low		*Low*	
Belfast	Ardoyne	Londonderry	Riverside
Londonderry	Westland	Belfast	Donegall
Strabane	Dunnamanagh	Dungannon	Killymaddy
Newry and Mourne	St. Patrick's	Moyle	Glenariff
Moyle	Bushmills	Belfast	University
Londonderry	Banagher	Newry and Mourne	Camlough
Strabane	East	Londonderry	Creggan South
Limavady	Greysteel	Newry and Mourne	St. Patrick's
Omagh	Drumnakilly	Belfast	Whiterock
Newry and Mourne	Ballybot	Cookstown	Killycolpy
Ballymoney	Benvardin	Dungannon	Coalisland, South
Omagh	Sixmilecross	Dungannon	Coalisland, North
Strabane	West	Newry and Mourne	Daisy Hill
Dungannon	Altmore	Magherafelt	Draperstown
Fermanagh	Rosslea	Belfast	Duncairn
Newry and Mourne	Creggan	Limavady	Magilligan
Cookstown	Killycolpy	Moyle	Glendun
Craigavon	Woodside	Craigavon	Woodside
Craigavon	Court	Limavady	Binevenagh
Dungannon	Ballygawley	Dungannon	Washingbay
Craigavon	Church	Craigavon	Woodville
Belfast	Suffolk	Londonderry	Waterloo
Cookstown	Dunnamore	Limavady	Dungiven
Magherafelt	Draperstown	Craigavon	Brownlow
Fermanagh	Newtownbutler	Cookstown	Gortalowry
Cookstown	Pomeroy	Lisburn	Collin
Moyle	Glenariff	Omagh	Owenglen
Limavady	Feeny	Strabane	Castlederg
Ballymoney	Kiloquin Upper	Omagh	Drumquin
Armagh	Downs	Newry and Mourne	Ballybot
Strabane	Clare	Omagh	Killyclogher
Strabane	Castlederg	Londonderry	Springtown
Newry and Mourne	Belleek	Newry and Mourne	Newtownhamilton
Belfast	St. James	Limavady	Feeny
Londonderry	Waterloo	—	—
Limavady	The Highlands	—	—
Coleraine	Churchland	—	—
Magherafelt	Bellaghy	—	—
Newry and Mourne	Fathom	—	—
Omagh	Fintona	—	—
Newry and Mourne	Newtownhamilton	—	—

Original index		Revised index	
Belfast	St. George's	—	—
Belfast	Grove	—	—

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement concerning the items discussed at the meeting of Foreign Secretaries of the member states of the European Economic Community at Parknarsilla, Eire, on 19 and 20 May.

Mr. Maude: This was a successful meeting. Ministers discussed political union, (on which the debate was constructive) and preparations for the Dublin European Council. They also covered relations with other states in Europe and north America. There was a brief discussion of South Africa, during which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs gave an account of President de Klerk's visit to this country. As is normal at informal meetings, no decisions were taken.

Vietnamese Boat People

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the suspending of the screening process for Vietnamese boat people at the Upper and Lower Chi Ma Wan detention centres in November 1989.

Mr. Maude: Screening was suspended at the Chi Ma Wan centres in November 1989 because the boat people refused to attend the screening interviews.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the average length of time between arrival in Hong Kong and a screening interview for a Vietnamese refugee at each detention centre.

Mr. Maude: Drawing on recent experience, we estimate that the average length of time between arrival in Hong Kong and a screening interview for a Vietnamese refugee is nine months.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is numbers and percentages of Vietnamese boat people screened in Hong Kong have *(a)* served in the armed forces of the former Government of South Vietnam, *(b)* been involved in political organisations opposed to the present Vietnamese Government, *(c)* recorded participation in religious activities in Vietnam, *(d)* complained of deprivation of economic and social rights and *(e)* been prosecuted or disciplined by the present regime in Vietnam.

Mr. Maude: The information is not available in the form requested. However, the categories of people identified in this question are likely to have a strong case for refugee status. The composite screening-in rate (ie the combined total of those screened-in at the first instance and at appeal stages) is about 16 per cent.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the average length of a screening interview for Vietnamese refugees at detention camps in Hong Kong.

Mr. Maude: Most screening interviews take about half a day, but it is not uncommon for interviewing to take up to two days.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the number of Vietnamese boat people who have had their refugee status confirmed on the principle of family reunification.

Mr. Maude: A total of 663 people have been granted refugee status on family reunification grounds.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what percentage of Vietnamese boat people who have not been granted refugee status after the first screening interview have applied for review of their cases; and with what results.

Mr. Maude: Ninety-nine per cent. of those screened-out at the first stage have applied for review by the refugee status review board. Of the reviews completed so far, 8·5 per cent. have been successful and in 91·5 per cent. of cases the board has upheld the director of immigration's initial decision.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place a copy of the rules for the conduct of refugee status review boards for Vietnamese boat people in the Library.

Mr. Maude: A copy is being placed in the Library of the House.

El Salvador

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will make a statement concerning the findings of the detectives from Scotland Yard who visited El Salvador to assist investigations into the murder of the six Jesuit priests, their cook and daughter;

(2) if he will place a copy of the Scotland Yard detectives' report into the murders at the Central American university in El Salvador, in the Library.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) on 21 May at column *33*.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government have made any representations to the Government of the United States of America concerning the levels of American military aid to El Salvador.

Mr. Sainsbury: No.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Government

of El Salvador concerning the progress on the investigation into the murders at the Central American university.

Mr. Sainsbury: We and our EC partners have frequently made clear to the Salvadorean Government the importance of bringing the investigation to a successful conclusion, and the murderers to justice.

Indo-Chinese Refugees

Mr. Hague: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will a statement on the outcome of the informal working level meeting in Manila in 17-18 May of the steering committee set up under the comprehensive plan of action adopted by the 1989 Geneva conference on Indo-Chinese refugees.

Mr. Maude: Representatives of 26 countries, the EC Commission and the International Organisation for Migration met in Manila on 17-18 May to review all components of the comprehensive plan of action (CPA).

On 16 May, representatives of the Governments of the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei and the United Kingdom/Hong Kong issued the following statement:

"For over 15 years, countries in South-East Asia and Hong Kong have provided temporary refuge to Vietnamese boat people at tremendous cost to themselves. This burden has become intolerable and cannot continue. The CPA adopted by the ICIR in June 1989 is aimed at securing a durable solution to the VBP problem within a definite time frame of three years through the implementation of all its interdependent provisions.

The viability of the CPA, however, has been undermined by selective implementation of its provisions. While countries of temporary refuge have been urged to continue to provide first asylum, crucial elements of the CPA have either not been given due focus or totally ignored. In particular, clandestine departures from Vietnam have continued and two CPA participants have blocked repatriation of non-refugees who do not volunteer to return.

In the light of the above, countries of temporary refuge wish to stress the following:

1. Responsibility for solving the problem of VBP rests primarily with Vietnam as the country of origin;

2. Vietnam should take more effective measures to deter clandestine departure and promote the Orderly Departure Programme (ODP) as the sole mode of departure for emigration. On humanitarian grounds, all CPA participants have a duty to co-operate to bring to an end clandestine departures involving risky journeys across the sea or otherwise;

3. The near consensus reached at the Steering Committee Meeting in January 1990 in Geneva, particularly the date for ending the moratorium on repatriating non-refugees who do not volunteer, should be implemented as from 1 July 1990;

4. The repatriation of non-refugees who do not volunteer to return is essential to the CPA's viability and survival. Without it, the status determination procedure has no meaning or purpose;

5. There is an obligation on any country which opposes the repatriation of non-refugees who do not volunteer to offer an effective intermediate solution, such as the setting up and financing on its own territory of a regional holding centre for all non-refugees, as envisaged in the CPA;

6. In the event of failure to agree even an intermediate solution to the VBP problem, countries of temporary refuge must reserve the right to take such unilateral action as they deem necessary to safeguard their national interests, including the abandonment of temporary refuge.

Countries of temporary refuge express their concern at the recent upsurge of Cambodian boat people in South-East Asia, noting that this category of boat people is not covered by CPA".

The overwhelming majority of participants at the Manila meeting reaffirmed that non-refugees should return to their country of origin in accordance with international practice reflecting the responsibilities of states towards their own citizens. If, however, agreement on the near consensus of the last steering committee on the duration of a moratorium on non-voluntary repatriation was again prevented, an intermediate solution, such as the establishment of a holding centre for non-refugees, should be found. They also agreed on the importance to tackle the root causes of clandestine departure from Vietnam through humanitarian programmes in that country. In that connection the British delegation announced a special scheme to support NGO activities in those parts of North Vietnam from which boat people come, for which purpose a sum of £1 million has been set aside. In addition, Vietnam has been added to the list of countries participating in the general joint funding scheme under which the ODA meets 50 per cent. of the costs of agreed NGO projects.

Finally, the meeting recommended that the full steering committee should meet again in the very near future, possibly in late June in Geneva. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees was requested to bring the gravity of the situation to the attention of the Governments concerned and it was also noted that various demarches would be made to the same end by other participating states.

Cash Limits

Mr. Arbuthnot: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he proposes to make any changes in his Department's diplomatic wing cash limits for 1990-91.

Mr. Sainsbury: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class II, vote 2 (other external relations) will be increased by £12,130,00 from £163,889,000 to £176,019,000. This change reflects increased costs on United Nations Observer Force in Central America (ONUCA), International Support and Verification Commission in Central America (CIAV), drugs, assistance to dependent territories and military assistance to Portugal. Part of this increase is offset by a transfer from class II, vote 1 (overseas representation) where the cash limit will be reduced by £1,330,000 from £536,052,000 to £534,722,000 representing a reduced provision for the overseas estate. Part is offset by transfer from Ministry of Defence class I, vote 2. The balance of the increase will be charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

HEALTH

Health Authorities (Spending)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish a table showing for each of the health regions in England *(a)* the gross revenue spending per head of population and *(b)* the capital spending per head of population for the year 1989-90 and the corresponding allocations for 1990-91.

Mr. Dorrell: The 1989-90 annual accounts are not yet due for submission to the Department and information

derived from them will not be available until the autumn. It is not possible to publish comparable figures for allocations in 1990-91. This is because allocations to health authorities are made on a net basis and exclude such things as income generation receipts, land sales, etc. Details of net allocations per head of population, for both revenue and capital, are given in the table.

Region	*1990-91 Revenue allocation per head of population £'s*	*1990-91 Capital allocation per head of population £'s*
Northern	298	20
Yorkshire	283	20
Trent	273	21
East Anglian	272	18
North West Thames	300	19
North East Thames	343	20
South East Thames	317	19
South West Thames	311	17
Wessex	263	20
Oxford	392	26
South Western	284	19
West Midlands	280	24
Mersey	302	19
North Western	311	22
England	298	20

Notes: At initial cash allocation levels.

St. Ann's Psychiatric Unit, Nottingham

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received about the closure of St. Ann's adolescent psychiatric unit in Nottingham; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: We have received two representations about St. Ann's, including one from the hon. Member. I understand that Nottingham health authority plans to strengthen its adolescent psychiatric service by appointing a professor with a supporting senior lecturer and fifth mental health team. In the meantime, the health authority hopes to cover the consultant vacancy with a locum.

Dental Technicians

Mr. Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the qualifications required for a National Health Service dental technician.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Dental technicians are graded as medical technical officers (MTOs). The Whitley council agreement requires that MTOs should hold a Business and Technical Education Council/Scottish Vocational Educational Council qualification, City and Guilds or other suitable technical qualification in an appropriate discipline.

Mr. Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the scales of pay for National Health Service *(a)* dental surgeon assistants and *(b)* dental technicians.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The pay and conditions of service of these groups are matters for negotiation by the Professional and Technical Staffs B Whitley council.

Current rates for dental surgery assistants (DSAs) effective from 1 July 1989, are set out in the table:

Student DSA £	*Age*	*DSA £*	*Senior £*	*Tutor £*
3,885	16	5,523	5,875	7,291
4,089	17	5,797	6,187	7,622
4,513	18	6,063	6,598	7,934
4,671	19	6,319	6,959	8,328
4,816	20	6,567	7,310	8,558
4,964	21 and over	7,025	7,647	8,869
5,118	—	—	—	—
5,267	—	—	—	—
5,499	—	—	—	—

I understand that negotiations on the staff side's pay claim for this group have not yet started.

Dental technicians are graded as medical technical officers (MTOs). Current rates of pay, effective from 1 September 1989 following a grade restructuring, are set out in the table:

Trainee £	*MTO1 £*	*MTO2 £*	*MTO3 £*	*MTO4 £*	*MTO5 £*
4,743	6,751	8,542	11,241	13,676	16,639
4,933	7,021	8,884	11,690	14,223	17,304
5,130	7,302	9,239	12,158	14,792	17,996
5,335	7,594	9,608	12,644	15,383	18,716
5,549	7,897	9,993	13,150	15,999	19,465
5,771	8,213	10,392	[1]13,676	[1]16,639	[1]20,248
6,001	[1]8,542	10,808	[1]14,223	[1]17,304	[1]21,053
—	[1]8,884	[1]11,241	[1]14,792	[1]17,996	[1]21,895
—	[1]9,239	[1]11,690	—	—	—
—	—	[1]12,158	—	—	—

[1] Salary points are for use when salary scales have been advanced to recognise special skills or additional responsibilities.

I understand negotiations on the staff side's pay claim for this group are continuing.

Hospital Beds, Greenwich

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total number of hospital beds in each of the past five years in the London borough of Greenwich.

Mr. Dorrell: The available information is given in the table.

Average daily available beds, and in-patient cases treated, Greenwich district health authority, 1984-1988/89.

Year	*Available beds*	*In-patient cases treated*	*In-patient cases treated per available bed*
1984	1,586	40,137	25·3
1985	1,517	40,381	26·6
1986	1,334	36,358	27·3
1987-88	1,249	36,943	29·6
1988-89	1,150	34,554	30·0

Source:
SH3 return, 1984-1986
KHO3 & SH3a returns, 1987-88 onwards

DES/stilboestrol

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what evidence he has on a connection between the use of the drug DES/stilboestrol to treat pregnant women and the incidence of cancer in their daughters in early womanhood;

(2) if he has any evidence of effects on the sons of women who have been treated with the drug DES/stilboestrol during pregnancy;

(3) if there is any evidence that treatment of pregnant women with the drug DES/stilboestrol gives rise to congenital abnormality in future generations.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In 1971 a study was published reporting the occurrence in the United States of America of delayed onset genital tract cancer in the daughters of women treated with stilboestrol in pregnancy. In May 1973 the Committee on Safety of Medicines (CSM) sent a letter to all doctors describing these findings, at which time no cases had been reported in the United Kingdom. A retrospective study by CSM in 1973 did not identify any case of genital tract cancer associated with maternal stilboestrol treatment. It was not until 1978 that the first United Kingdom case was reported in a publication. Further communications in 1981 between the authors and CSM described another patient. It has been estimated in the United States of America that the incidence of genital tract cancer is 1·4 per 1,000 women whose mothers received stilboestrol. It has been estimated that in the United Kingdom approximately 7,500 women received stilboestrol during pregnancy; on the basis of the incidence figures in the United States of America, we would expect no more than 11 United Kingdom cases of cancer in the second generation. It is possible that the incidence in the United Kingdom is less, since dosage and pattern of usage have been reported to differ from those of the United States of America.

A paper published in 1975 reported cases of congenital structural abnormalities of the male and female genital tract in patients whose mothers were treated with stilboestrol during pregnancy. Since then there have been further published papers.

CSM has received no reports of congenital abnormality of the reproductive tract associated with stilboestrol treatment.

At present in the United Kingdom, stilboestrol is indicated for the treatment of prostatic cancer, and of breast cancer in postmenopausal women. It is contraindicated in pregnancy.

Global Nutritional Guidelines

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if any decision was taken at the recent World Health Organisation meeting in Geneva concerning the adoption or development of global nutritional guidelines; what is his policy on this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: No decision was taken about global nutrition guidelines at the recent WHO (World Health Assembly) meeting in Geneva. We are aware that the WHO has this matter under consideration but no guidelines have yet been prepared. The Department of Health takes the lead in matters connected with the WHO and will be involved in any discussion on this topic. Our policy on nutritional guidelines is based upon advice from the Committee on the Medical Aspects of Food Policy and at present relates only to the United Kingdom.

Hearing Aids

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many representations he has received, and from whom, in the past three years concerning the availability of a wider range of shades for National Health Service hearing aids;

(2) if he will make a wider range of shades available for National Health Service hearing aids; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: At least one model in each of the standard ranges of National Health Service post-aural hearing aids is available in dark brown as well as beige.

I am advised by the Mersey regional health authority, which negotiates the national contracts for standard range models on behalf of the NHS, that demand for the dark brown models was very low until about two years ago. Since then an increased demand for dark brown aids led to a temporary shortage which caused a number of representations to Mersey RHA by hearing aid centres. I am pleased to say that this problem has been resolved and that both colours are now readily available.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hearing aids have been distributed by the National Health Service for each of the past 10 years to *(a)* children under 16 years of age and *(b)* adults over 16 years of age; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not held centrally.

Area Health Authorities (Devon)

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what requests for changes or amalgamations he has received from area health authorities in Devon; and what is his response.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: None.

Leicestershire Health Authority

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans his Department has to deal with financial problems affecting the Leicestershire health authority; and if he will make a statement on what progress has been made in this matter.

Mr. Dorrell: As the hon. Member is well aware, district health authorities are responsible for living within their cash limits. Leicestershire health authority has a budget of £222 million for 1990-91 and has produced prudent plans to make sure it can balance its books.

Cash Limits

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether any changes will be made to the cash limits and running cost limits for his Department in 1990-91.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimates, the following changes will be made:

The cash limit for class XIII vote 1 (hospital and community health services, family practitioner services (part) and other services, England) will be increased by £178,800,000 (from £13,724,057,000 to £13,902,857,000) to help provide, from 1 April 1990, for the pay awards recommended in the 1990 reports of the review bodies for nursing staff, midwives and professions allied to medicine, and on doctors' and dentists' remuneration, as announced by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 1 February 1990.

The cash limit for class XIII vote 3 (Department of Health administration, miscellaneous health services and personal social services, England) will be increased by £1,531,000 (from £686,387,000 to £687,918,000).

This increase provides for £1,200,000 to meet, from 1 April 1990, the review body recommendations mentioned above; for a £40,000 transfer from class VI, vote 2, (Department of Employment, other programmes and central services) in respect of the workplace advisory services and a net transfer (£291,000) from class XIV, vote 7 (Department of Social Security, administration and miscellaneous services) in respect of printing and office machines. The provision for running costs on this vote and the Department's running cost limit is increased by £3,594,000 from £198,493,000 to £202,087,000.

The public expenditure costs of these changes have been charged to the reserve and do not add to the public expenditure planning total.

Regional Health Authority Chairmen

Mr. Stevens: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he will make a statement on the appointment of regional health authority chairmen from 1 August.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The terms of office of 12 of the 14 regional health authority chairmen expire on 31 July 1990. I am pleased to announce that I have made four new appointments as follows:

Northern RHA: Peter Carr
North East Thames RHA: Tim Chessells
South Western RHA: Charles Stuart
Oxford RHA: Dr. Stuart Burgess

These appointments run until 31 July 1992.

The chairmen of the following eight RHAs have accepted my invitation to serve in these most important positions for another four years each:

Yorkshire: Sir Bryan Askew
North West Thames: Mr. William Doughty
Trent: Sir Michael Carlisle
South West Thames RHA: Baroness Cumberlege of Newick
West Midlands RHA: Sir James Ackers
Mersey RHA: Sir Donald Wilson
North Western RHA: Mr. Bruce Martin
Wessex RHA: Mr. Robin Buchanan

Infant Milk Products

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether guidelines have been issued to hospitals on the use of infant milk products containing soya.

Mr. Dorrell: Yes. Advice to health authorities about infant feeding issued in July 1989 drew the attention of health care professionals to the report from the Committee on the Medical Aspects of Food Policy "Present day practice in Infant Feeding." This report stated that soya-based infant formulas can be used where an alternative to a formula based on cow's milk is clinically indicated but that in such cases a dietician's expert advice is essential to ensure that this does not lead to any nutritional deficiencies.

Mental Handicap

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish a table showing, in the case of the Northern regional health authority, how the reduction in provision of hospital provision for the mentally ill and the mentally handicapped has been translated into increased community care provision, using both output indicators and input indicators.

Mr. Dorrell: We do not hold information centrally that would enable us to establish a valid correlation between hospital provision for mentally ill or mentally handicapped people in the region and community care provision.

I recently announced plans which will enable local authorities to increase the level of care they offer to mentally ill people being treated in the community. Health authorities will be required to ensure that any reduction in the number of hospital beds for mentally handicapped and mentally ill people does not outpace the development of alternative community services. The hon. Member may care to contact the chairman of the Northern regional health authority for more information.

Abortion

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list by health district, for the last available year, *(a)* the percentage of second trimester abortions and *(b)* the abortion rate.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he has any plans to seek to change *(a)* the legal requirements concerning notification of abortions to the chief medical officer or *(b)* the penalties in cases where such requirements are not met; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The regulations relating to notification of abortions to the chief medical officer would need to be amended to meet the requirements of any changes Parliament decided to make to the law on abortion during the passage of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill. We have no plans in relation to the penalty prescribed in section 2(3) of the Abortion Act 1967 as amended.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what explanations have been offered to the chief medical officer explaining late submissions of abortion notifications.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Most of the notifications in question were completed at the time of termination. The explanations given to the chief medical officer are usually admitted oversight, personnel changes, forms being temporarily mislaid through filing in hospital notes, or staff illness.

Smoking (Children)

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received about the voluntary agreement on tobacco advertising and sponsorship being circumvented by the practice of tobacco companies paying film companies for the placing of brand name tobacco products in films likely to be televised and watched by children; and what steps he will take to stop this practice.

Mr. Dorrell: We have recently received representations on the question of "product placement", as this practice is known, from ASH and Parents Against Tobacco quoting examples of American-produced films shown in the United Kingdom. We do not have any evidence that this practice is being used by the United Kingdom tobacco industry but if such evidence emerges we will raise the matter with it in the context of our system of voluntary agreements.

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received about the illegal sale of single cigarettes to children; and if he will take steps to prohibit the practice of selling cigarettes from opened packs.

Mr. Dorrell: We have received three representations on this subject, two of them from hon. Members.

The sale of any tobacco product to a child under 16 years of age is already illegal. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary is considering ways in which the relevant legislation can be strengthened.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans the Government have to bring in legislation to tackle the problem of children smoking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I have been asked to reply.

The Government are very concerned about children smoking and the way in which the law on the sale of tobacco to children is being flouted. The steps which might be taken to strengthen the law in this area are under review.

Cot Deaths

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what stage his official scientific inquiry into cot deaths has reached; when he anticipates receiving this report; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave the hon. Members for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith), for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) and for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) on 16 May at column *414*.

Secure Accommodation (Young People)

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many local authority social services departments provide secure accommodation for young people which can be used as an alternative to prison.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Local authority social services departments provide a range of facilities and services which may be used as an alternative to a custodial sentence or a prison department remand. This includes a national network of approved secure accommodation, currently provided by 27 social services departments in England in 34 individual secure units, to which all local authorities have access.

Accident and Emergency Units

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the population served of each district health authority; and how many accident and emergency centres each district has.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 11 May 1990]:* The available information is given in the table.

Comparisons between district health authorities based on the number of accident and emergency departments per head of resident population may be misleading as factors such as the population density, the numbers of holidaymakers or workers coming into the district, and ready access to specialised services in adjacent districts are taken into account when planning services. Furthermore the heading "accident and emergency" includes departments offering a wide range of levels of service.

Resident population estimates, by district health authority, as at 30 June 1988, and numbers of NHS hospital sites having accident and emergency departments, by health authority, as at 31 March 1989

Northern RHA

Health authority	*Resident population (thousands)*	*Number of hospital sites having A and E departments*
Hartlepool	88·4	1
North Tees	176·8	1
South Tees	287·9	11
East Cumbria	179·4	13
South Cumbria	172·6	2
West Cumbria	137·2	13
Darlington	124·5	1
Durham	233·9	1
North West Durham	85·9	1
South West Durham	152·5	1
Northumberland	301·4	17
Gateshead	206·2	1
Newcastle	279·6	2
North Tyneside	192·9	5
South Tyneside	155·7	2
Sunderland	296·1	2

Yorkshire RHA

Health authority	*Resident population (thousands)*	*Number of hospital sites having A and E departments*
Hull	297·6	9
East Yorkshire	198·8	9
Grimsby	157·5	1
Scunthorpe	196·6	3
Northallerton	117·2	7
York	264·7	7
Scarborough	145·8	7
Harrogate	135·8	2
Bradford	337·0	2
Airedale	176·7	4
Calderdale	195·9	1
Huddersfield	211·5	1
Dewsbury	163·8	1
Leeds Western	365·3	2
Leeds Eastern	344·3	2
Wakefield	145·2	1
Pontefract	166·4	4

Trent RHA

Health authority	*Resident population (thousands)*	*Number of hospital sites having A and E departments*
North Derbyshire	363·2	10
Southern Derbyshire	530·8	13
Leicestershire	885·5	23
North Lincolnshire	273·2	12
South Lincolnshire	309·4	14
Bassetlaw	104·8	1
Central Nottinghamshire	289·2	2
Nottingham	613·7	1
Barnsley	220·9	1
Doncaster	291·6	3
Rotherham	251·8	1
Sheffield	528·3	5

East Anglian RHA

Health authority	*Resident population (thousands)*	*Number of hospital sites having A and E departments*
Cambridge	275·6	1
Peterborough	208·5	5
West Suffolk	228·1	5
East Suffolk	322·6	9
Norwich	472·4	11
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	200·1	4
West Norfolk and Wisbech	191·4	7
Huntingdon	135·7	1

North West Thames RHA

Health authority	*Resident population (thousands)*	*Number of hospital sites having A and E departments*
North Bedfordshire	251·6	1
South Bedfordshire	279·1	1
North Hertfordshire	186·0	4
East Hertfordshire	294·6	1
North West Hertfordshire	261·4	2
South West Hertfordshire	243·9	1
Barnet	301·4	3
Harrow	197·1	1
Hillingdon	231·7	2
Hounslow and Spelthorne	276·6	6
Ealing	297·3	1
Riverside	276·0	4
Parkside	373·7	4

North East Thames Regional Health Authority

Health authority	*Resident population (thousands)*	*Number of hospital sites having A and E departments*
Basildon and Thurrock	282·0	2
Mid Essex	290·8	1
North East Essex	311·6	7
West Essex	249·9	11
Southend	325·3	1
Barking, Havering and Brentwood	453·1	2
Hampstead	108·4	1
Bloomsbury	126·7	1
Islington	169·2	1
City and Hackney	193·3	2
Newham	207·0	1
Tower Hamlets	161·8	2
Enfield	260·9	1
Haringey	192·3	1
Redbridge	230·8	1
Waltham Forest	213·3	1

South East Thames Regional Health Authority

Health Authority	*Resident population (thousands)*	*Number of hospital sites having A and E departments*
Brighton	308·2	5
Eastbourne	235·2	4
Hastings	169·3	9
South East Kent	268·4	4
Canterbury and Thanet	309·3	12
Dartford and Gravesham	217·2	3
Maidstone	199·3	2
Medway	330·2	3
Tunbridge Wells	196·0	10
Bexley	220·4	1
Greenwich	214·5	2
Bromley	298·2	3
West Lambeth	158·6	1
Camberwell	210·5	1
Lewisham and North Southwark	316·3	3

South West Thames RHA

Health authority	*Resident population (thousands)*	*Number of hospital sites having A and E departments*
North West Surrey	206·9	8
West Surrey and North East Hampshire	277·6	1
South West Surrey	181·1	7
Mid Surrey	165·2	5
East Surrey	182·6	10
Chichester	182·6	n/a
Mid Downs	276·8	4
Worthing	244·0	4
Croydon	317·2	4
Kingston and Esher	177·2	2
Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	229·7	1
Wandsworth	188·2	2
Merton and Sutton	332·3	5

Wessex RHA

Health authority	*Resident population (thousands)*	*Number of hospital sites having A and E departments*
East Dorset	451·7	11
West Dorset	203·9	17
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire	527·9	17
Southampton and South West Hampshire	419·7	2
Winchester	212·3	2
Basingstoke and North Hampshire	220·9	1
Salisbury	121·0	2
Swindon	234·2	4
Bath	407·0	12
Isle of Wight	129·8	1

Oxford RHA

Health authority	*Resident population (thousands)*	*Number of hospital sites having A and E departments*
East Berkshire	362·1	2
West Berkshire	454·2	5
Aylesbury Vale	145·4	2
Wycombe	268·2	9
Milton Keynes	177·6	1
Kettering	258·3	1
Northampton	312·0	1
Oxfordshire	545·9	32

South Western RHA

Health authority	*Resident population (thousands)*	*Number of hospital sites having A and E departments*
Bristol and Weston	367·7	4
Frenchay	221·8	5
Southmead	232·3	4
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	460·6	23
Exeter	308·6	24
North Devon	135·6	19
Plymouth	334·3	16
Torbay	242·6	21
Cheltenham	212·4	17
Gloucester	315·1	12
Somerset	405·0	18

West Midlands RHA

Health authority	*Resident population (thousands)*	*Number of hospital sites having A and E departments*
Bromsgrove and Redditch	167·1	3
Herefordshire	157·3	6
Kidderminster and District	102·6	4
Worcester and District	243·9	11
Shropshire	400·8	36
Mid Staffordshire	313·8	4
North Staffordshire	461·5	3
South East Staffordshire	257·6	8
Rugby	86·3	1
North Warwickshire	175·1	1
South Warwickshire	223·3	7
Central Birmingham	180·2	2
East Birmingham	196·9	1
North Birmingham	164·0	1
South Birmingham	246·1	2
West Birmingham	206·6	2
Coventry	306·2	2
Dudley	304·3	1
Sandwell	296·3	1

Health authority	Resident population (thousands)	Number of hospital sites having A and E departments
Solihull	204·9	2
Walsall	262·3	1
Wolverhampton	249·4	2

Mersey RHA

Health authority	Resident population (thousands)	Number of hospital sites having A and E departments
Chester	176·7	1
Crewe	248·5	2
Halton	143·6	2
Macclesfield	179·9	13
Warrington	187·7	1
Liverpool	469·6	13
St. Helens and Knowsley	346·0	2
Southport and Formby	120·1	1
South Sefton	177·5	3
Wirral	354·3	3

North Western RHA

Health authority	Resident population (thousands)	Number of hospital sites having A and E departments
Lancaster	131·1	1
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde	320·0	13
Preston	128·1	1
Blackburn, Hynburn and Ribble Valley	264·8	3
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale	228·3	1
West Lancashire	105·4	1
Chorley and South Ribble	196·8	2
Bolton	263·6	2
Bury	175·0	2
North Manchester	139·7	2
Central Manchester	122·4	6
South Manchester	183·8	2
Oldham	219·5	1
Rochdale	214·2	1
Salford	235·6	1
Stockport	290·9	1
Tameside and Glossop	247·0	1
Trafford	215·8	3
Wigan	307·6	2

Special Health Authorities

Health authority	Resident population (thousands)	Number of hospital sites having A and E departments
The Hospitals for Sick Children	—	1
Moorfields Eye Hospital	—	1
Bethlem Royal and Maudsley Hospitals	—	1
Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's	—	1
The Eastman Dental Hospital	—	2

Source: Population estimates, Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.
A and E departments, KH03 return.
n/a = not available.

WALES

Local Government Finance

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest figures for *(a)* the number of people on the community charge register, *(b)* the number who have applied for rebates and *(c)* how many of these have been successful, for (i) Carmarthen district, (ii) the borough of Dinefwr and (iii) Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The latest figures notified to me state the position as at 1 December 1989. These are:

	Numbers
Carmarthen district	44,208
Dinefwr borough	30,028
Wales	2,215,187

Information about the matters listed under *(b)* and *(c)* is not yet available.

Health Care (Elderly People)

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what provisions have been made to provide improved health care facilities for the elderly in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: In addition to services provided specifically for them, the elderly have benefited from the considerable improvements made to health services in general. Since 1978-79, 41 per cent. more revenue resources in real terms have been provided and between September 1979 and September 1989 over 18 per cent. more staff directly concerned with patient care. Throughput of in-patients increased by 31 per cent. and new out-patients by 22 per cent. between 1979-80 and 1988-89. Further improvements are in prospect under the reforms proposed in the National Health Service and Community Care Bill. In addition, the Department's initiative on the elderly in Wales has funded demonstration projects testing out new ways of providing the elderly with health and social care.

Local Authority Dwellings

Mr. John P. Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the estimated capital investment on new buildings *(a)* in cash and *(b)* in real terms for each local authority for each year since 1979.

Mr. David Hunt: Information collected centrally for local authorities relates in general to the category new construction and works, which includes renovation work. The only area of local authority capital expenditure where separate information is available for construction alone is the building of dwellings, figures for which are shown in the following tables. Information for 1979-80 and 1980-81 was not collected on a comparable basis and is therefore not included.

Capital payments on building of dwellings 1981-82 to 1984-85: Cash prices

£000

Local Authority	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85
Alyn and Deeside	657	1,507	894	1,115
Colwyn	408	514	442	439
Delyn	131	91	0	849

Local Authority	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85
Glyndwr	1,250	906	317	26
Rhuddlan	652	832	762	709
Wrexham Maelor	1,067	1,340	1,493	1,524
Carmarthen	1,659	1,926	1,933	1,040
Ceredigion	1,619	1,240	2,630	908
Dinefwr	263	480	1,003	510
Llanelli	690	666	708	1,287
Preseli	409	178	6	304
South Pembroke	109	109	399	431
Blaenau Gwent	2,523	1,478	549	1,931
Islwyn	860	648	1,333	760
Monmouth	1,382	1,407	2,186	2,072
Newport	3,898	2,092	3,476	4,290
Torfaen	1,230	2,240	1,963	1,090
Aberconwy	183	483	390	563
Arfon	703	445	609	454
Dwyfor	250	82	84	146
Meirionnydd	550	619	539	71
Ynys Môn	1,008	1,156	1,545	803
Cynon Valley	116	252	562	306
Merthyr Tydfil	730	425	373	96
Ogwr	1,659	952	1,897	1,882
Rhondda	912	131	56	54
Rhymney Valley	1,655	1,790	2,471	1,200
Taff Ely	1,820	1,613	1,988	411
Brecknock	428	650	480	192
Montgomeryshire	229	431	424	421
Radnorshire	270	889	743	284
Cardiff	6,358	5,703	7,409	2,484
Vale of Glamorgan	756	731	341	603
Pot Talbot	250	79	0	13
Lliw Valley	1,685	1,611	1,720	739
Neath	801	779	782	924
Swansea	1,988	1,716	1,799	1,363
Total Wales	41,158	38,191	44,306	32,294

Capital payments on building of dwellings 1985-86 to 1988-89: Cash prices

£000

Local Authority	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
Alyn and Deeside	661	1,112	996	1,076
Colwyn	210	134	0	0
Delyn	0	0	0	0
Glyndwr	12	6	90	897
Rhuddlan	714	589	526	518
Wrexham Maelor	1,013	854	571	412
Carmarthen	665	907	0	292
Ceredigion	943	1,196	1,163	563
Dinefwr	422	848	574	128
Llanelli	1,800	1,504	1,718	2,132
Preseli	250	578	377	448
South Pembroke	106	122	9	0
Blaenau Gwent	629	643	1,718	1,237
Islwyn	428	1,639	1,040	451
Monmouth	1,980	1,052	469	827
Newport	3,293	1,682	7,366	3,354
Torfaen	757	911	681	143
Aberconwy	185	5	30	0
Arfon	217	377	526	565
Dwyfor	126	71	21	109
Meirionnydd	21	27	198	203
Ynys Môn	662	662	801	392
Cynon Valley	42	221	421	103
Merthyr Tydfil	151	85	601	0
Ogwr	973	366	1,039	1,152
Rhondda	60	14	2	0
Rhymney Valley	779	385	581	458
Taff Ely	571	1,257	1,378	1,886
Brecknock	439	659	799	656
Montgomeryshire	328	453	550	585
Radnorshire	205	318	75	305
Cardiff	435	350	1,792	582
Vale of Glamorgan	479	545	766	692
Port Talbot	6	0	0	0
Lliw Valley	587	385	726	667
Neath	760	847	1,166	901
Swansea	612	1,146	1,230	1,171
Total Wales	21,521	21,950	30,000	22,905

Capital payments on building of dwellings 1981-82 to 1984-85: 1988-89 prices[1]

£000

Local Authority	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85
Alyn and Deeside	952	2,036	1,154	1,371
Colwyn	591	694	570	540
Delyn	190	123	0	1,044
Glyndwr	1,810	1,224	409	32
Rhuddlan	944	1,124	983	872
Wrexham Maelor	1,545	1,810	1,927	1,874
Carmarthen	2,403	2,602	2,495	1,279
Ceredigion	2,345	1,675	3,394	1,116
Dinefwr	381	648	1,294	627
Llanelli	999	900	914	1,582
Preseli	592	240	8	374
South Pembroke	158	147	515	530
Blaenau Gwent	3,654	1,997	709	2,374
Islwyn	1,246	875	1,720	934
Monmouth	2,002	1,901	2,821	2,548
Newport	5,646	2,826	4,486	5,275
Torfaen	1,781	3,026	2,533	1,340
Aberconwy	265	652	503	692
Arfon	1,018	601	786	558
Dwyfor	362	111	108	180
Meirionnydd	797	836	696	87
Ynys Môn	1,460	1,562	1,994	987
Cynon Valley	168	340	725	376
Merthyr Tydfil	1,057	574	481	118
Ogwr	2,403	1,286	2,448	2,314
Rhondda	1,321	177	72	66
Rhymney Valley	2,397	2,418	3,189	1,475
Taff Ely	2,636	2,179	2,566	505
Brecknock	620	878	619	236
Montgomeryshire	332	582	547	518
Radnorshire	391	1,201	959	349
Cardiff	9,209	7,704	9,562	3,054
Vale of Glamorgan	1,095	987	440	741
Port Talbot	362	107	0	16
Lliw Valley	2,440	2,176	2,220	909
Neath	1,160	1,052	1,009	1,136
Swansea	2,879	2,318	2,322	1,676
Total Wales	59,611	51,590	57,182	39,706

[1] Adjusted to a constant price basis using the GDP deflator.

Capital payments on building of dwellings 1985-86 to 1988-89: 1988-89 prices[1]

£000

Local Authority	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
Alyn and Deeside	771	1,255	1,067	1,076
Colwyn	245	151	0	0
Delyn	0	0	0	0
Glyndwr	14	7	96	897
Rhuddlan	833	665	563	518
Wrexham Maelor	1,182	964	612	412
Carmarthen	776	1,024	0	292
Ceredigion	1,100	1,350	1,246	563
Dinefwr	492	957	615	128
Llanelli	2,131	1,597	1,840	2,132
Preseli	292	652	404	448
South Pembroke	124	138	10	0
Blaenau Gwent	734	726	1,840	1,237
Islwyn	499	1,850	1,114	451
Monmouth	2,311	1,187	502	827
Newport	3,843	1,898	7,891	3,354
Torfaen	883	1,028	729	143
Aberconwy	216	6	32	0
Arfon	253	425	563	565

Local Authority	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
Dwyfor	147	80	22	109
Meirionnydd	25	30	212	203
Ynys Môn	773	747	858	392
Cynon Valley	49	249	451	103
Merthyr Tydfil	176	96	644	0
Ogwr	1,135	413	1,113	1,152
Rhondda	70	16	2	0
Rhymney Valley	909	435	622	458
Taff Ely	666	1,419	1,476	1,886
Brecknock	512	744	856	656
Montgomeryshire	383	511	589	585
Radnorshire	239	359	80	305
Cardiff	508	395	1,920	582
Vale of Glamorgan	559	615	821	692
Port Talbot	7	0	0	0
Lliw Valley	685	435	778	667
Neath	887	956	1,249	901
Swansea	714	1,293	1,318	1,171
Total Wales	25,115	24,774	32,136	22,905

[1] Adjusted to a constant price basis using the GDP deflator.

Mr. John P. Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the estimated capital investment in real terms on *(a)* renovation and *(b)* renovation grants of local authority dwellings for each local authority for each year since 1979 (i) in cash and (ii) in real terms.

Mr. David Hunt: The information available is shown in the tables. Information for 1979-80 and for 1980-81 was not collected on a comparable basis and is therefore not included.

Gross renovation of local authority dwellings: cash prices

£000

Local authority	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
Alyn and Deeside	852	1,170	1,260	1,428	1,682	1,918	1,583	1,827
Colwyn	602	596	733	461	965	1,280	853	893
Delyn	760	581	1,122	0	858	1,741	1,376	2,794
Glyndwr	129	349	670	1,023	924	1,108	1,119	735
Rhuddlan	83	154	94	131	34	286	301	175
Wrexham Maelor	1,248	1,657	2,355	2,186	3,046	4,815	5,653	4,435
Carmarthen	228	244	529	322	659	775	2,321	1,487
Ceredigion	222	714	1,165	289	724	439	798	1,085
Dinefwr	349	695	202	269	433	403	805	773
Llanelli	570	923	1,311	144	269	356	482	256
Preseli	900	1,806	1,474	1,442	1,311	1,353	1,352	1,298
South Pembroke	254	506	520	244	495	428	628	557
Blaenau Gwent	1,210	5,351	3,385	2,310	2,533	6,586	4,920	3,862
Islwyn	820	2,442	2,848	2,638	1,548	1,617	1,870	1,687
Monmouth	190	256	592	586	2,296	3,295	4,317	3,067
Newport	927	2,655	2,770	2,727	3,470	3,366	3,619	2,751
Torfaen	1,630	2,382	2,080	2,710	2,733	4,506	3,242	6,462
Aberconwy	331	433	1,118	966	808	1,131	1,240	1,704
Arfon	1,108	890	1,406	569	594	648	1,084	725
Dwyfor	58	107	120	86	59	101	54	275
Meirionnydd	28	112	319	314	0	44	49	271
Ynys Môn	272	603	993	33	118	1,476	1,492	2,171
Cynon Valley	611	801	655	456	638	943	1,593	1,139
Merthyr Tydfil	648	1,363	1,453	1,454	904	2,231	3,916	2,600
Ogwr	731	1,809	2,907	1,952	1,975	1,827	2,426	3,120
Rhondda	1,554	1,981	2,148	1,093	603	668	2,257	8,355
Rhymney Valley	422	1,414	1,461	1,843	2,026	3,990	4,269	4,830
Taff Ely	916	1,376	1,176	942	874	2,399	4,263	2,355
Brecknock	237	196	383	502	603	527	246	595
Montgomeryshire	286	230	460	477	299	1,213	1,392	688
Radnorshire	71	195	141	51	206	196	126	182
Cardiff	1,564	3,898	3,890	4,392	8,379	7,025	14,342	19,243
Vale of Glamorgan	286	1,383	779	803	385	1,682	1,721	1,132
Lliw Valley	303	630	858	972	1,033	1,343	1,907	2,191
Neath	318	1,107	695	235	1,202	1,583	2,041	2,440
Port Talbot	285	1,243	1,505	1,887	1,085	1,580	4,169	3,921
Swansea	2,930	3,744	2,724	4,968	3,899	3,904	4,153	3,378
Total Wales	23,933	45,996	48,301	42,905	49,670	68,783	87,979	95,459

Gross renovation from local authorities to the private sector: cash prices

£000

Local authority	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
Alyn and Deeside	193	489	781	844	323	558	729	610
Colwyn	262	557	1,072	692	743	749	862	802
Delyn	239	495	1,098	459	389	512	576	424
Glyndwr	123	574	1,507	1,511	571	458	528	636
Rhuddlan	14	39	67	158	74	114	163	236
Wrexham Maelor	125	268	500	407	317	289	222	293
Carmarthen	536	1,083	6,275	2,766	1,898	1,917	1,977	1,657
Ceredigion	319	925	2,941	1,833	1,123	1,609	818	643
Dinefwr	171	201	1,360	840	416	364	410	388
Llanelli	227	605	2,119	1,795	770	882	1,232	1,465
Preseli	459	647	2,411	2,512	1,240	1,530	1,485	1,348
South Pembroke	427	1,074	2,607	3,082	1,884	1,760	1,901	1,848

Local authority	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
Blaenau Gwent	453	2,206	6,141	3,496	1,193	2,137	3,068	1,530
Islwyn	408	1,202	2,748	2,500	2,650	3,436	3,178	4,002
Monmouth	208	857	3,132	1,058	643	902	859	417
Newport	1,252	3,350	4,019	2,093	2,380	2,392	2,118	1,974
Torfaen	198	390	1,562	2,082	1,156	1,396	1,400	1,524
Aberconwy	265	340	763	530	524	412	365	557
Arfon	654	883	1,913	1,913	1,841	1,786	1,582	1,322
Dwyfor	237	674	2,560	1,190	377	665	526	461
Meirionnydd	194	432	2,599	3,086	1,465	937	256	339
Ynys Môn	173	654	3,950	1,116	1,167	779	748	776
Cynon Valley	255	1,008	2,554	1,326	1,123	2,048	3,849	3,280
Merthyr Tydfil	383	842	2,419	1,400	1,228	1,187	1,468	1,964
Ogwr	876	1,815	2,730	3,083	1,664	2,180	2,596	3,190
Rhondda	1,277	2,739	9,016	9,558	6,001	5,853	5,543	5,113
Rhymney Valley	503	1,495	2,918	3,303	1,408	2,062	3,132	3,065
Taff Ely	1,238	2,841	5,902	3,691	1,782	1,859	872	1,097
Brecknock	225	535	2,049	984	364	407	546	571
Montgomeryshire	121	603	2,585	1,094	449	530	532	753
Radnorshire	132	337	920	552	408	289	360	381
Cardiff	1,292	2,530	10,623	6,904	7,378	9,103	10,764	9,436
Vale of Glamorgan	423	1,567	3,409	2,489	1,013	1,729	1,288	1,342
Lliw Valley	586	1,206	1,314	1,081	413	792	1,452	1,315
Neath	284	1,269	2,602	1,360	923	1,354	1,400	1,395
Port Talbot	270	250	500	361	738	943	1,135	1,127
Swansea	1,483	3,680	5,796	5,748	5,095	5,470	3,839	5,084
Total Wales	16,485	40,662	107,462	78,897	53,131	61,390	63,779	62,365

Gross renovation of local authority dwellings: 1988-89 prices[1]

£000

Local authority	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
Alyn and Deeside	1,234	1,580	1,626	1,756	1,963	2,165	1,696	1,827
Colwyn	872	805	946	567	1,126	1,445	914	893
Delyn	1,101	785	1,448	0	1,001	1,965	1,474	2,794
Glyndwr	187	471	865	1,258	1,078	1,251	1,199	735
Rhuddlan	120	208	121	161	40	323	322	175
Wrexham Maelor	1,808	2,238	3,039	2,688	3,555	5,434	6,056	4,435
Carmarthen	330	330	683	396	769	875	2,486	1,487
Ceredigion	322	964	1,504	355	845	495	855	1,085
Dinefwr	505	939	261	331	505	455	862	773
Llanelli	826	1,247	1,692	177	314	402	516	256
Preseli	1,304	2,440	1,902	1,773	1,530	1,527	1,448	1,298
South Pembroke	368	684	671	300	578	483	673	557
Blaenau Gwent	1,753	7,228	4,369	2,840	2,956	7,433	5,270	3,862
Islwyn	1,188	3,299	3,676	3,243	1,806	1,825	2,003	1,687
Monmouth	275	346	764	721	2,679	3,719	4,624	3,067
Newport	1,343	3,586	3,575	3,353	4,049	3,799	3,877	2,751
Torfaen	2,361	3,218	2,684	3,332	3,189	5,086	3,473	6,462
Aberconwy	479	585	1,443	1,188	943	1,276	1,328	1,704
Arfon	1,605	1,202	1,815	700	693	731	1,161	725
Dwyfor	84	145	155	106	69	114	58	275
Meirionnydd	41	151	412	386	0	50	52	271
Ynys Môn	394	815	1,282	41	138	1,666	1,598	2,171
Cynon Valley	885	1,082	845	561	745	1,064	1,706	1,139
Merthyr Tydfil	939	1,841	1,875	1,788	1,055	2,518	4,195	2,600
Ogwr	1,059	2,444	3,752	2,400	2,305	2,062	2,599	3,120
Rhondda	2,251	2,676	2,772	1,344	704	754	2,418	8,355
Rhymney Valley	611	1,910	1,886	2,266	2,364	4,503	4,573	4,830
Taff Ely	1,327	1,859	1,518	1,158	1,020	2,708	4,567	2,355
Brecknock	343	265	494	617	704	595	264	595
Montgomeryshire	414	311	594	586	349	1,369	1,491	688
Radnorshire	103	263	182	63	240	221	135	182
Cardiff	2,265	5,266	5,020	5,400	9,778	7,929	15,363	19,243
Vale of Glarmorgan	414	1,868	1,005	987	449	1,898	1,844	1,132
Lliw Valley	439	851	1,107	1,195	1,205	1,516	2,043	2,191
Neath	461	1,495	897	289	1,403	1,787	2,186	2,440
Port Talbot	413	1,679	1,942	2,320	1,266	1,783	4,466	3,921
Swansea	4,244	5,058	3,516	6,108	4,550	4,406	4,449	3,378
Total Wales	34,663	62,133	62,338	52,753	57,964	77,631	94,244	95,459

[1] Adjusted to constant price basis using the GDP deflator.

Gross renovation grants from local authorities to the private sector: 1988/89 prices[1]

£000

Local authority	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
Alyn and Deeside	280	661	1,008	1,038	377	630	781	610
Colwyn	379	752	1,384	851	867	845	923	802
Delyn	346	669	1,417	564	454	578	617	424
Glyndwr	178	775	1,945	1,858	666	517	566	636
Rhuddlan	20	53	86	194	86	129	175	236
Wrexham Maelor	181	362	645	500	370	326	238	293
Carmarthen	776	1,463	8,099	3,401	2,215	2,164	2,118	1,657
Ceredigion	462	1,250	3,796	2,254	1,311	1,816	876	643
Dinefwr	248	272	1,755	1,033	485	411	439	388
Llanelli	329	817	2,735	2,207	899	995	1,320	1,465
Preseli	665	874	3,112	3,089	1,447	1,727	1,591	1,348
South Pembroke	618	1,451	3,365	3,789	2,199	1,986	2,036	1,848
Blaenau Gwent	656	2,980	7,926	4,298	1,392	2,412	3,286	1,530
Islwyn	591	1,624	3,547	3,074	3,093	3,878	3,404	4,002
Monmouth	301	1,158	4,042	1,301	750	1,018	920	417
Newport	1,813	4,525	5,187	2,573	2,777	2,700	2,269	1,974
Torfaen	287	527	2,016	2,560	1,349	1,576	1,500	1,524
Aberconwy	384	459	985	652	611	465	391	557
Arfon	947	1,193	2,469	2,352	2,148	2,016	1,695	1,322
Dwyfor	343	910	3,304	1,463	440	751	563	461
Meirionnydd	281	584	3,354	3,794	1,710	1,058	274	339
Ynys Môn	251	883	5,098	1,372	1,362	879	801	776
Cynon Valley	369	1,362	3,296	1,630	1,311	2,311	4,123	3,280
Merthyr Tydfil	555	1,137	3,122	1,721	1,433	1,340	1,573	1,964
Ogwr	1,269	2,452	3,523	3,791	1,942	2,460	3,781	3,190
Rhondda	1,850	3,700	11,636	11,752	7,003	6,606	5,938	5,113
Rhymney Valley	729	2,020	3,766	4,061	1,643	2,327	3,355	3,065
Taff Ely	1,793	3,838	7,617	4,538	2,080	2,098	934	1,097
Brecknock	326	723	2,644	1,210	425	459	585	571
Montgomeryshire	175	815	3,336	1,345	524	598	570	753
Radnorshire	191	455	1,187	679	476	326	386	381
Cardiff	1,871	3,418	13,710	8,489	8,610	10,274	11,531	9,436
Vale of Glamorgan	613	2,117	4,400	3,060	1,182	1,951	1,380	1,342
Lliw Valley	849	1,629	1,696	1,329	482	894	1,555	1,315
Neath	411	1,714	3,358	1,672	1,077	1,528	1,500	1,395
Port Talbot	391	338	645	444	861	1,064	1,216	1,127
Swansea	2,148	4,971	7,480	7,067	5,946	6,174	4,112	5,084
Total Wales	23,876	54,928	138,691	97,006	62,003	69,287	68,321	62,365

[1] Adjusted to constant price basis using the GDP deflator.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many new factory units have been built, and how much industrial land has been purchased by the Welsh Development Agency in Gwynedd during the past 12 months.

Mr. David Hunt: During the 1989-90 financial year the Welsh Development Agency completed 10 units totalling 19·5k sq ft at Porthmadog. Presently under construction are 18 units measuring 56k sq ft at Gaerwen and 14 units measuring 27k sq ft at Cibyn industrial estate, Caernarfon. The Welsh Development Agency will shortly be starting the construction of a 12k sq ft business centre at Parc Menai, near Bangor, which will be followed later in the year by four high specification units totalling 20k sq ft. During this financial year the Welsh Development Agency also intends to start construction on rural workshop schemes at Llangefni and Porthmadog each measuring some 10k sq ft.

Land acquisitions in the county over the same period total 45 acres, and an option to purchase a further 20·5 acres was also completed in the year. Efforts to identify further strategic sites in the region are continuing.

Chernobyl

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was his estimate of the likely radiation levels in sheep in Wales in the period from the Chernobyl accident to May 1990; and what was the actual level.

Mr. David Hunt: In view of the complex factors involved, it is not possible to make meaningful estimates of this kind. The percentage of sheep failing the live monitor test when leaving the restricted areas fell from 14 per cent. in 1987 to 4 per cent. in 1989.

National Health Service and Community Care Bill

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what mechanisms will exist after the implementation of the National Health Service and Community Care Bill to enable district health authorities to ensure that the wishes of their local communities are taken into account.

Mr. Grist: The interests of local communities in the health service in their district will continue to be represented by the community health councils. District health authorities will continue to consult on proposals for substantial developments or variations in the provision of the service.

University Health Studies Centre

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he is in a position to respond to the proposal for the establishment of a centre for health studies based on the university college of North Wales, Bangor; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Roberts: The proposal that a centre for health studies should be established and based on the university college of North Wales, Bangor, is being considered in the context of the Department's consultation paper "The Health Service in Wales Towards 2000: Manpower Planning, Education and Training", responses to which are currently being considered.

Employment Training

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much money in total will be granted by the employment Training Agency for training programmes following the restructuring of funding for local training plans.

Mr. Roberts: During 1990-91 the Training Agency in Wales' estimated expenditure on training programmes is £114,000,000. How much of this will be allocated to training and enterprise councils will depend upon their individual start dates. Currently in the development phase, all seven TECs in Wales are expected to be operational by about the turn of the year.

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much funding has been provided for training programmes by the employment Training Agency since its inception.

Mr. David Hunt: Since the Training Agency was established in September 1988 to 31 March 1990, the latest data available, expenditure on training programmes in Wales has been £161,000,000.

Welsh Development Agency Properties

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list in the *Official Report (a)* the location of Welsh Development Agency properties sold to the private sector, for the last available financial year, where a sitting tenant existed, *(b)* the name of the sitting tenant in each case and *(c)* the rent paid before and after the property sale.

Mr. David Hunt: The information requested in *(a)* and *(b)* above is as follows:

Properties sold as Investments 1989-90
Hendy industrial estate, Hendy, Dyfed
Unit 3—Sooner Snacks Ltd.
Unit 4—Wave Computer Supplies
Unit 5—St. Teilo Training Services
Unit 6—Dyfed Building Supplies
Unit 7—Pavilion Engineering Company Ltd.
Unit 8—Finning Limited
Unit 9—Automotive and Industrial Chemicals Ltd.

Maesgwynne industrial estate, Merthyr Tydfil
Unit 2—Rayles Rewinds

Court Road industrial estate, Cwmbran
Unit 32—Data Stripe Ltd.
Unit 33—Data Stripe Ltd.
Unit 45—Photographic Images Ltd.
Unit 46—Autobind Ltd.
Unit 47—Easyscene Ltd.

Springvale industrial estate, Cwmbran
Unit 50—R. J. B. Glass and Double Glazing Centre
Unit 51—R. J. B. Glass and Double Glazing Centre
Unit 52—W. E. D. Automatics Ltd.
Unit 53—Sacol Hydraulics Ltd.

The above information excludes sales to sitting tenants, which have comprised the majority of WDA property disposals to date.

Details of rents paid by individual WDA tenants is commercially confidential information. In general however, it is agency policy to obtain the best consideration available under market circumstances.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what rights exist for a review of rent increases levied on sitting tenants in Welsh Development Agency properties sold into the private sector.

Mr. David Hunt: Both public and private sector organisations operate within the general framework of the Landlord and Tenants Act 1954 and tenants' rights conferred by this legislation would apply. In essence the Act provides that existing occupational leases and tenants' contractual rights will remain unaffected by a change of ownership, which means that rents will not be reviewed purely as a result of a sale. Tenants also have statutory protection in respect of security of tenure when the lease is due for renewal. There is a further provision for recourse to arbitration if settlement of rent cannot be achieved between landlord and tenant.

Nurses

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what assessment he has made of the problems that will arise in respect of nurse recruitment in the border counties of Wales if the full introduction of the Project 2000 training initiative for nurses is not implemented as originally planned in 1990-91;

(2) what assessment he has made of the problems that will arise in respect of nurse recruitment in health authorities in Wales if the full introduction of the Project 2000 training initiative for nurses is not implemented as originally planned in 1990-91;

(3) what assessment he has made of the problems that will arise in respect of nurse morale in Wales if the introduction of the Project 2000 training initiative for nurses is not fully implemented as originally planned in 1990-91;

(4) what assessment he has made of the problems that will arise in respect of administrative and personnel matters if the introduction of the Project 2000 training initiative for nurses is not fully implemented as originally planned in 1990-91;

(5) what assessment he has made of the problems that will arise in respect of manpower planning in health authorities in Wales if the introduction of the Project 2000 training initiative for nurses is not fully implemented as originally planned in 1990-91.

Mr. Grist: The decision to phase implementation of Project 2000 in Wales was taken in the light of information obtained from draft implementation plans submitted by district health authorities, the financial implications of a simultaneous all-Wales implementation set against the resource requirements of the Health Service in Wales generally, and the complex planning task at the local level

in laying the foundations for the educational reforms which Project 2000 involves. The implications of the decision to phase for manpower issues are being addressed as part of the manpower resource planning process, and other work undertaken by the manpower steering group with health authorities in the wider context of demographic trends and increased competition in the employment field. There will also be administrative implications which each individual health authority will need to address.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will make it his policy that the Project 2000 initiative on nurse training shall be implemented in south-east Wales, including Newport and Cardiff, in 1990-91.

Mr. Grist: No. It has been decided that there should be a phased approach to the implementation of Project 2000 in Wales with the new courses commencing in north Wales in 1991, in west Wales in 1992 and south-east Wales in 1993. The possibility of bringing forward the south-east Wales start to 1992 will be kept under review.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will announce the detailed timetable for the full introduction of the Project 2000 training initiative for nurses in each part of Wales, giving the specific implementation dates for each health authority in Wales.

Mr. Grist: Implementation of Project 2000 in Wales will proceed on a phased basis commencing with the introduction of the new courses in north Wales (Clwyd and Gwynedd) in autumn 1991, in west Wales (Pembrokeshire, East Dyfed, West Glamorgan and Powys) in 1992, and in south-east Wales (Mid Glamorgan, South Glamorgan and Gwent) in 1993. In the case of west and south-east Wales, it is possible for the courses to begin in the spring of the relevant year, thus involving a delay of only six and 18 months respectively over the original planning assumption.

The possibility of bringing forward the south-east Wales start to 1992 will be kept under review.

Health Authorities

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy as to whether the nine health authorities in Wales should continue to cover their present geographical areas during and after the implementation of the National Health Service and Community Care Bill.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend has no current proposals to alter the geographical responsibilities of the existing health authorities but the position will be kept under review in light of the provisions of the National Health Service and Community Care Bill, including those for self-governing status.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to issue a directive to health authorities in Wales directing that when a patient at a National Health Service hospital needs to be transferred to another hospital within the same area for treatment or examination, the authority shall bear the responsibility and cost of transport for that transfer.

Mr. Grist: This is an operational matter for the district health authorities, which decide on the advice of the patient's clinician, the transport which is appropriate to the patient's needs.

Gwynedd Health Authority

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will hold urgent discussions with the chair of Gwynedd health authority concerning the effects of the industrial dispute relating to the pay of senior secretarial staff, on the ability of the authority to meet its statutory responsibilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: We understand a settlement has been reached and all medical secretaries returned to duty on 22 May.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which officer members of the management team of Gwynedd health authority are appointed under fixed-term contracts; at what date each of these was first appointed; for what period; and when is their next renewal date.

Mr. Grist: Other than the district and unit general managers, no officer members of the district management team have been appointed on fixed-term contracts.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when the general manager of Gwynedd health authority was first appointed and for what period of time; and when was the contract renewed and for what period.

Mr. Grist: The district general manager for Gwynedd health authority was first appointed in February 1985 on a short-term rolling contract for an initial period of three years. The contract is renewable annually and was last renewed this year.

National Health Service Trusts

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has on any formal or informal expressions of interest in the establishment of a National Health Service trust by *(a)* any hospital in Wales and *(b)* any health authority; and if he will list the bodies that have expressed any such interest.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend has received no formal expression of interest to date. It would not be appropriate to list informal expressions of interest which may or may not have formalised.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will make it his policy to allow the individuals and communities affected by any hospital or health authority opt-out proposals in Wales to take the final decision themselves;

(2) if he will set out in full the requirements and pattern of consultation to be followed if any health authority in Wales or any hospital in Wales seeks to consider establishing a National Health Service trust.

Mr. Grist: Any application for self governing status will be the subject of consultation with interested parties, including, in particular, the health authorities concerned, hospital staff, general practitioners, community health councils and the local community. Detailed arrangements for consultation will depend on the nature of any particular applications received and decisions will take into account the comments of all consultees.

Ozone Levels

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will establish a monitoring system and introduce a strategy aimed at reducing high ground-level ozone levels in mid-Wales; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will estimate the annual effect of low-level ozone upon agriculture in Wales; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will estimate how adversely crop yield will be affected if (1) low-level ozone levels in Wales maintain their current rate and (2) they maintain their annual rate of growth; and if he will make a statement;

(4) by what percentage he expects the level of low-level ozone in Wales to increase in the next decade; and what effects he foresees of its impact upon agriculture.

Mr. David Hunt: On behalf of the Government the Warren Spring laboratory operates an ozone monitoring network designed to provide a continuous assessment of the ground-level ozone climate for the whole of the United Kingdom. It includes a site in Wales, and the extent and coverage of the network is kept under review. In addition my Department is currently funding the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, Bangor, to carry out a study of the effects of typical rural concentrations of ozone and other atmospheric pollutants on the health of plant species in Wales.

The effects of ozone on agriculture were considered in a report by the Department of the Environment's independent expert review group on photochemical oxidants. Copies of its first report have been placed in the Library of the House. Its findings, on the basis of research carried out in the United Kingdom and the United States of America indicate that sensitive crops such as turnip, bean, radish, barley, pea and spinach could be expected to show marginally reduced yields during the peak ozone concentrations monitored in Wales. If the rising trend in ozone levels were to continue, the effects on agriculture could be expected to become more severe.

The Government are, however, already taking steps to reduce substantially emissions of the primary pollutants which react to form ozone. These are detailed in an answer given to the hon. and learned Member today by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Community Mental Health Services

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if there are any plans to increase funding for community mental health services in Mid Glamorgan.

Mr. Grist: The county joint planning team (CJPT) in Mid Glamorgan has been offered initially £127,700 in 1990-91 to support developments under the mental illness strategy; these resources are in addition to those directly available to partner agencies in the team. Over £100,000 of the total relates to community-based developments of services for people with or recovering from mental illness. The CJPT has been invited to submit fuller details of its proposals in respect of community mental health teams, and we shall be considering these and the related bids for funding in due course.

NHS (Kings Fund)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy not to use the formula proposed by the Kings Fund of half a million people when determining the scope and area to be covered by procuring authorities in the Health Service in Wales.

Mr. Grist: We have no plans at present to adjust district health authority boundaries in Wales.

Mental Illness

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what sums have been allocated on a health district or county basis in Wales to pay for the Welsh office strategy on mental illness;

(2) how much money has been allocated in total for the Welsh Office strategy on mental illness in Wales for the current financial year.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) on 30 April at columns *425-26*.

Dr. Kim Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if any authority in Wales has received bridging finance for the implementation of the Welsh Office strategy on mental illness.

Mr. Grist: The mental illness strategy recognises the need for help in meeting the transitional costs of moving from existing to new patterns of service. Much of the £1·6 million offered to county teams for 1990-91, whilst not specifically described as bridging finance, is intended to enable the transition by supporting the development of locally and community-based services; these are a prerequisite for the redeployment of resources currently tied up in those existing patterns of service which are to be superseded in due course.

District Health Authorities

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what conditions attach to the use by district health authorities, when they sell land or buildings which they own, of capital receipts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on 21 May 1990 and to the reply given to the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) on 30 April 1990.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what guidelines have been given to district health authorities in Wales in relation to their revenue performance related to their total asset base; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Health authorities have a statutory obligation to manage both their revenue and capital within the cash provision allocated to them each year by my right hon. Friend. Additionally, they are required to commit at least 7·5 per cent. of their overall resource provision to the maintenance of capital assets. They are also required to submit performance reports for specific specialties and services against targets set by reference, as appropriate, to centrally prescribed strategic guidelines, published performance indicators and locally determined priorities within the framework of their financial plans. Authorities are also

required to achieve in 1990-91 cash-releasing cost improvements in their delivery of services of at least 1·1 per cent. of their recurring revenue provision and to generate additional recurring income equivalent to a further 0·2 per cent. of their recurrent revenue resources; and those authorities which failed to meet equivalent targets last year will be expected to make up the shortfall in 1990-91 as well as achieving this year's minimum targets.

Health Services

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list the authorities which will be responsible for providing health services in Wales and the area to be covered by each;

(2) if he will list the authorities which will be responsible for purchasing health services in Wales following implementation of his White Paper proposals.

Mr. Grist: The following health authorities will be responsible for securing the provision of services for the population of the areas indicated from 1 April 1991:

Authority	*Area*
Clwyd district health authority	County of Clwyd
Gwent district health authority	County of Gwent
Gwynedd district health authority	County of Gwynedd
Mid Glamorgan district health authority	County of Mid Glamorgan
Powys district health authority	County of Powys
South Glamorgan district health authority	County of South Glamorgan
West Glamorgan district health authority	County of West Glamorgan
Pembrokeshire district health authority	Preseli and South Pembrokeshire district councils
East Dyfed district health authority	Carmarthen, Ceredigion, Dinefwr and Llanelli district councils

Health Authorities (Management Structure)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which health authorities in Wales have completed a review of their management structures in line with the Government's legislative proposals; and, in each case where this has been completed, whether the approval of his office has yet been given.

Mr. Grist: Health authorities are continuously keeping under review the appropriateness of their management structures and will be expected to look particularly at the implications of the Government's proposals set out in the White Papers "Working for Patients" and "Caring for People", and working papers issued subsequently, in that context.

Residential Homes

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many places there were, respectively, in *(a)* local authority elderly persons homes and *(b)* private residential homes for elderly persons in Gwynedd at the most recent available date; and what were the corresponding figures for 1980 and 1985.

Mr. Grist: The numbers of places at 31 March in each year were:

	1980	*1985*	*1989*
Local Authority Homes	853	855	848
Private Homes	141	630	1,119

Out-patient Clinics

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list by district health authority in Wales, and by discipline, the non-district general hospital locations where out-patient clinics are currently held by consultant National Health Service staffs;

(2) if he will list, by district health authority in Wales and by discipline, the non-district general hospital locations where in 1980 out-patient clinics were held by consultant National Health Service staff, but which no longer offer such services;

(3) if he will list by district health authority in Wales, and by discipline, the non-district general hospital locations where out-patient clinics are currently held by consultant National Health Service staffs.

Mr. Grist: The latest available information is published in "Bed Use Statistics 1988-89" a copy of which is in the Library. Clinics run by general practitioners are identified separately. Comparable figures for 1980 have been published in "Bed Use Statistics" for that year, a copy of which is in the Library.

Cervical Screening

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on his further plans for the screening of women for cervical cancer in Wales.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend and I continue to regard the development of cervical screening services as a priority. All district health authorities in Wales now have computerised screening programmes in place for women aged 20-64 years. Since 1986-87 the Welsh Office has allocated some £1·3 million of recurring central funds to health authorities to help them extend and improve their screening services. Officials of the Welsh Office will continue to keep in close touch with progress and a multi-disciplinary working group is to be formed which will produce further guidance on an all-Wales basis concerning the management and quality assurance of the programme.

Unit General Managers (Contracts)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many of the unit general managers serving health authorities in Wales are bound by fixed-term contracts; and whether any guidance is given by his Department as to the length of such contracts or the procedure for renewing such contracts.

Mr. Grist: All unit general managers in health authorities in Wales are appointed on short-term rolling contracts of between three and five years. Guidance on appointment procedures, the content, length and renewal of contracts and other related matters was initially issued in 1984 and again in 1986.

Surgical Procedures

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list, for each health authority area in Wales, each of the non-district general hospital locations where

surgical procedures are still carried out by consultant-led teams; how many surgical cases were treated in each such hospital in the most recently available 12-month period; and what was the number of cases similarly treated in each such hospital in 1980 and in 1985;

(2) if he will list the non-district general hospital locations in Wales where in 1980 surgical procedures were being carried out by consultant-led teams, but which no longer do so.

Mr. Grist: Details of in-patient hospital episodes in 1988-89 under the care of consultants in general surgery, ENT, traumatic and orthopaedic surgery, ophthalmology, urology, plastic surgery, thoracic surgery, dental surgery, orthodontics, neurosurgery, gynaecology, burns surgery and cardiac surgery are published in "Bed Use Statistics" a copy of which is in the Library. Comparable figures for 1980 and 1985 have been published in "Bed Use Statistics" for those years, copies of which are in the Library.

Educational Medicine

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many nurses are engaged in educational medicine and the care of children in hospitals in Wales; and if he will give similar figures for the last five years.

Mr. Grist: Information is available centrally only on the total staff in post for all nursing and midwifery staff. Breakdowns of these figures into occupation category are not considered reliable.

Cash Limits

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he proposes to make any changes to the cash limits for class XVI, votes 5 and 8 in 1990-91.

Mr. David Hunt: Yes. Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimates, the cash limit for class XVI, vote 5 will be increased by £495,000 from £317,330,000 to £317,825,000 and the cash limit for class XVI, vote 8 will be increased by £11,125,000 from £951,713,000 to £962,838,000.

The addition to class XVI, vote 5 largely covers (i) an increase of £245,000 in respect of discretionary assistance for higher education students, particularly those facing high accommodation costs, and (ii) payments to flood appeal funds in north Wales (£150,000), as announced on 15 March 1990, *Official Report,* at column *348.*

The remainder of the increase for class XVI, vote 5 (£100,000) and the increase for class XVI, vote 8 (£11,125,000) follow the decision to implement the recommendations of the review bodies for nursing staff, midwives, health visitors and professions allied to medicine and on doctors' and dentists' remuneration, as announced by the Prime Minister on 1 February 1990 at column *260.*

The increase to class XVI, vote 5, in respect of the contribution to the north Wales flood appeal funds was offset by savings from class XVII, vote 5 in 1989-90. The other increases will be charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

National Consumer Council

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he has received a copy of the National Consumer Council report, "International Trade and the Consumer Working Paper 2: Textiles and Clothes"; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has received a copy of the National Consumer Council report, "International Trade and the Consumer Working Paper 3: Shoes; the Cost of Neglecting Consumers' Interests"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The National Consumer Council sent copies of its working papers 2 and 3, on textiles and clothes, and shoes, respectively, to all DTI Ministers. We welcome the general thrust of the NCC's conclusions in both papers that the cost to consumers should be taken into account whenever trade restrictions are under consideration. This is a point we regularly make in Community discussions. It needs to be balanced against other interests including those of our producers. I look forward to seeing the final conclusions of the NCC's study.

European Training Programme

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proportion of the young European executives who will be visiting Japan to improve management techniques and gain proficiency in the Japanese language, under the European training programme funded by the European Commission, are British nationals.

Mr. Redwood: Nine British nationals will participate in the 10th ETP due to start on 28 May, out of a total of 46 European company executives.

This is the highest ever number of British participants.

Cash Limits

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if any changes will be made to his Department's main supply estimates for cash-limited expenditure in 1990-91.

Mr. Ridley: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary revised estimate, the cash limit for class IV vote 2 (Support for industry, international trade, statutory and regulatory work, consumer protection and administration) will be reduced by £58,000 from £787,435,000 to £787,377,000, and the running cost limit by the same amount from £304,292,000 to £304,234,000. Provision of £4,850,000 will be sought for outstanding ex gratia payments to Barlow Clowes investors and for administrative expenses incurred by the Government's agents in respect of the ex gratia payments, and provision of £2,000,000 for legal costs in connection with Barlow Clowes recovery actions. There will be a corresponding reduction of £6,850,000 in provision for support for industrial research and development, reflecting an anticipated underspend. Additional provision will also be sought for the Companies House executive agency and the radiocommunications executive agency in order to enable them to meet their planned requirements: in both cases, the additional provision will be fully matched by additional receipts. In addition, provision of £38,000 will

be transferred to class XIX vote 2 (the Cabinet Office) to cover the transfer of the post of Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and provision of £20,000 will be transferred to class X vote 1 (the Lord Chancellor's Department) in respect of work being carried out for the Department.

The proposed outstanding Barlow Clowes payments and recovery actions are new services and it is expected that some payments will fall due within the next few weeks. Pending parliamentary approval for these new services, expenditure will therefore be met by repayable advances from the Contingencies Fund.

Transnor

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has made to the Commodity Futures Trading Commission following the Transnor case; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 23 May 1990]:* My Department wrote to the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) on 30 April about the implications of the interlocutory judgment in the "Transnor" case given on 18 April by the United States district court for the southern circuit of New York. Since then the Department has had detailed discussions with the CFTC, culminating in a joint statement issued in London and Washington on 16 May. I have arranged for copies of the letter and statement to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Air Services

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what indications of support and opposition there have been to his own Department and to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission from *(a)* the regions of England, *(b)* Scotland and *(c)* Wales regarding (i) the British Airways investment in Sabena World Airways and (ii) its proposals to develop services to and from regional airports in the United Kingdom and regional airports in Europe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley *[holding answer 22 May 1990]:* My Department has received a number of representations on this subject, the majority of them from Members of Parliament, including Members from Scotland, the north-west, the midlands, and the south-east of England. A number of the representations expressed views in favour of British Airways' investment in SWA. Fewer indicated support for proposals to develop services to and from regional airports in the United Kingdom and regional airports in Europe. Opposition has been indicated to the proposals from several quarters, expressing concerns about the impact of the BA/KLM/SWA arrangements on competition. As the merger created by BA's investment in SWA has now been referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, it would not be appropriate for me to comment further. Any representations made to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission are a matter for it.

Computer-based Construction Models

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he proposes to take any steps to regulate the codes for computer-based models used for technical decision-making on new civil engineering projects, new building designs and alterations on existing buildings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I have been asked to reply. A person carrying out building work must meet the requirements of the building regulations, including those relating to structural stability. Computer programmes may be used for design purposes, but the building control authority will need to consider the basic design assumptions and be satisfied that the building will meet the requirements of the regulations. The possibility of allowing professionally qualified engineers to certify their own work is at present under consideration.

European Community Trade Mark Office

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if it remains his policy to secure the location of the proposed European Community trade mark office in London.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: It is our policy that the Community trade mark system should be introduced as soon as possible. Early introduction requires agreement in the Community on the location of the office. Our proposal that the office should be in London remains on the table.

Junk Mail

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the representations he has received on junk mail posted within the United Kingdom and from abroad; and what plans he has to ban such mail.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I receive a small but steady flow of complaints from individuals about unsolicited mail. Recently, this has included complaints about some mail posted from abroad. Those who complain are primarily concerned about how their names and addresses were obtained.

I have no plans to ban such mail.

Hairdressers and Beauty Suppliers

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what consultations his Department has had with the Institute of European Hairdressers and Beauty Suppliers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I am not aware of any such consultations.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are his responsibilites in respect of the operation of the Hairdressing Council under the Hairdressing (Registration) Act 1964.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have no responsibilities in respect of the Hairdressing Council.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many staff are employed by his Department; and what proportion of them are employed in each of the standard regions.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 23 May 1990]:* The table shows the permanent staff employed by the Department (part-time staff are counted as half):

Total staff in post (including executive agencies) as at 1 April 1990	11,793

Proportion by standard region	Percentage of total
Northern Ireland	0·04
Scotland	5·02
Wales	13·55
North	2·05
North West	3·10
Yorkshire and Humberside	1·99
East Midlands	1·46
West Midlands	3·89
South West	1·73
South East	66·39
East Anglia	0·78

Public Appointments

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the full-time and part-time public appointments for which he is responsible, together with the salary and the date when the appointment is due for renewal.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 23 May 1990]:* Appointments to public bodies for which my Department is responsible are set out in "Public Bodies 1989", a copy of which is in the Library of the House. A more up-to-date list with the full details requested by the hon. Member will be published next month by the Women's National Commission under the title "Women into Public Appointments". A copy of this will be placed in the Library of the House.

Recycling

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on progress made so far by the advisory group on recycling.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 23 May 1990]:* The recycling advisory group has met three times. Its latest meeting, held on 26 March, considered the reports of individual subject-specific working parties. These reports have now been revised to take account of the main group's comments, and the views and recommendations they contain will be taken into account in preparing the forthcoming White Paper on the environment.

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if his Department has conducted a survey into the markets for *(a)* humus, *(b)* glass, *(c)* paper, *(d)* plastics, *(e)* metals, both ferrous and non-ferrous, and *(f)* other materials reclaimed from the domestic waste stream; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 23 May 1990]:* Working parties covering these and other materials were set up by the recycling advisory group. They considered market and other factors influencing recycling rates. The working parties' reports will be taken into account in preparing the forthcoming White Paper on the environment.

Rain Forests

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he is taking to encourage chemical and medical companies to identify beneficial uses of flora in tropical rain forests; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 17 May 1990]:* My Department is taking no such steps. However such companies will no doubt have noted the recent conference on the rain forest harvest organised earlier this month at the Royal Geographical Society which highlighted such opportunities.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Eastern Europe (Information Technology)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to encourage the involvement of further education's information technology programme with eastern European countries using the know-how fund.

Mrs. Chalker: We are discussing with the Hungarian authorities whether they would welcome a computing/information technology mission which would assess how best to use part of the know-how fund in this area. A similar mission is likely for Czechoslovakia. The terms of reference for the proposed mission would include determining which British academic or other institutions, firms or individuals should be involved.

Programme of Action

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has had urging support for SADCC's programme of action; and what response he has given.

Mrs. Chalker: I have received a number of representations. The Government's support for SADCC's programme of action is substantial; our total commitments to date for SADCC's regional programmes and projects amount to £70 million. British aid for SADCC member states since 1980 amounts to well over £1,000 million.

Mozambique and Angola

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list in the *Official Report* all projects recently undertaken or currently being planned to assist victims of conflict in Mozambique and Angola.

Mrs. Chalker: The table lists approved grants. A number of further proposals are currently under consideration.

Mozambique

In 1989-90 the allocations listed in the table were made under our emergency allocation for Mozambique. In addition we provided 19,000 MT of emergency food aid. For 1990-91 we have pledged £3·5 million plus 10,000 MT of food aid in response to the Mozambique emergency appeal.

	£
Accord	
Provisional planning in Niassa	30,000
Action Aid	
Airlift of relief food supplies for Maganja	106,895
Appraisal of district health services by a Health Consultant	5,893
Distribution of clothing to displaced people in Maganja da Costa and Pebane, Zambesia	300,000
Light ferry for Naburi	4,200

	£
Purchase and distribution of blankets, Maganja da Costa and Pebane	70,000
9 tonnes of seeds for Maganja and Naburi	22,000
390 tonnes of Red Beans	163,293
Emergency spares for Xai-Xai Bridge	30,168
CAFOD	
Assistance to emergency programme. Spare parts for Landrovers. Transit centre for displaced people	100,000
Food aid for Maputo	22,785
Rehabilitation of Pemba Hospital	18,610
CARE	
Provision of 15 trucks plus associated protection and spares	510,000
Christian Aid	
Local purchase of clothes for distribution to dislocados in Zambezia	105,000
Rehabilitation of Namorroi District, Zambezia	100,000
Seeds and tools for Zambezia	117,230
Concern	
Clothing programme for dislocados, Nampula	29,072
Improvement of living conditions in 2 reception centres, Nampula. Provision of clean water, Nampula	51,601
Seeds and tools, Memba	110,000
Co-operation for Development	
Support for small farmers and co-operatives, Zonas Verdas, Maputo	100,000
DPCCN	
Seeds and tools programme	100,000
Seeds and tools programme	300,000
Oxfam	
Provision of clothing in Zambezia	500,000
Seeds and tools in Niassa and Zambezia	50,000
Save the Children	
Zambezia bridges	600,000
VETAID	
Paravet training in Vilankula District (Rehab)	70,000
World Vision	
Agpak Project (agricultural rehabilitation)	100,000
Total	3,916,747

In addition we have contributed £3 million since January 1989 to the United Nations High Commissioner and £200,000 through NGOs for the relief of Mozambican refugees in neighbouring countries.

Angola

Since the beginning of 1989, the allocations from emergency funds for Angola have been as follows:

	£
CAFOD	
Vehicles	48,000
ICRC	
Clothing and blankets	100,000
Seeds and distribution costs	610,000
Oxfam	
Clothing, blankets, tools	70,000
Tarpaulins/prefabricated warehousing	34,000
War on Want	
Cholera treatment materials	10,000
World Food Programme	
Prefabricated warehousing for food aid storage	140,000
Warehousing	28,000
Total	1,040,000

We continue to monitor the situation closely and are considering what further assistance we might provide in response to the United Nations Secretary-General's appeal of 10 May.

Tobacco (Aid)

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the Government's policy on aid to the tobacco sector in developing countries.

Mrs. Chalker: Tobacco consumption is a significant health risk in developing countries. Nevertheless tobacco is a legal substance, a major traded commodity and a principal source of export earnings and budgetary revenue for a number of LDCs. The aid programme is used to assist agricultural development in a number of ways, including tobacco where it is an important cash crop for which no suitable substitutes are readily available. Aid funds are not used to finance imports into developing countries of tobacco and cigarettes. The Government believe that, as in United Kingdom domestic policy, the most sensible approach to reducing the damage to health from tobacco is demand reduction. Through our regular contribution to WHO we support that organisation's programme to reduce tobacco consumption in developing countries. We shall consider further support for developing countries in this field, both bilateral and multilateral.

DEFENCE

Reactors (Decommissioning)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, further to his answer of 15 May to the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney), if he will provide his latest estimate of the cost of decommissioning the reactors at Calder Hall and Chapelcross; and what proportion he estimates would fall to his Department.

Mr. Alan Clark: The responsibility for assessing the costs of decommissioning the reactors at Calder Hall and Chapelcross, and for meeting those costs, lies with BNFL. The Ministry of Defence share of the costs will depend on future usage of the reactors.

A90 Project, Aldermaston

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement upon the condition of the ducting used to carry inert gases and the supporting struts in the A90 plant at Aldermaston; and what reports he has received of gas leaks or potential gas leaks.

Mr. Neubert: The replacement of the A90 zone 1 ductwork and its supports by a pipework system was completed in April 1990. Memorandum No. 5 in the House of Commons Defence Committee's fifth report on the progress of the Trident programme (HC 374) gives full

details of the reasons for the replacement of the zone 1 ventilation ductwork. Full leak testing of the replacement pipework system has been carried out successfully.

Nuclear Submarines

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress his Department has made in checking the health record of every sailor who has served in a British submarine since 1960; how many have been checked and when he anticipates the checks will be completed; whether from the initial checks any trend of cancer cases among nuclear submariners relative to the general population can be discerned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Medical Research Council is currently conducting an epidemiological research programme into morbidity and mortality of submariners in the special environment in which they serve. Data are still being collected from the individual health records of submariners and I understand that this process will be completed by the end of this year. Analysis of the data will of course take some time after that and it would not be appropriate to speculate now on the study's possible conclusions.

United States European Reserve

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement as to the operational use of the United States European reserve headquarters at High Wycombe.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not our practice to comment on operational plans.

United States Hospitals

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the United States network of wartime-use-only hospitals in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: United States wartime contingency hospitals are currently prepositioned in the United Kingdom at the following locations:
RAF Chessington, RAF Little Rissington, RAF Nocton Hall, RAF Bicester, RAF Feltwell, RAF Upwood.

United States Submarines

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement as to the current operational role of the United States submarines operating from the River Clyde.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Details of the current operational role of United States submarines are a matter for the United States Government. However, United States submarines which visit the facility at Holy Loch generally do so in the course of deployment which contributes to the Alliance's strategy of deterrence.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list by year for the last four years, the number of United States operational submarines based on the River Clyde.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None. All United States submarines visiting the Holy Loch facility operate from bases in the United States.

Nuclear Power Stations

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list by year for the last five years, the number of breaches that have been made to the exclusion zones at *(a)* Sizewell and *(b)* Bradwell nuclear power stations by military jet aircraft.

Mr. Neubert: Over the period concerned, only one complaint about low-flying military jet aircraft near the Sizewell and Bradwell nuclear power stations has been substantiated. This related to a 1985 incident in the vicinity of Sizewell. One recent complaint from Sizewell is currently under investigation.

United States Aircraft (Crashes)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list by year for the last five years and by aircraft type and mark the number of United States aircraft that have crashed in the United Kingdom that were *(a)* based in the United Kingdom and *(b)* overflying the United Kingdom.

Mr. Neubert: Our records show that there have been no crashes in the United Kingdom involving United States military aircraft not based here. Details of major accidents involving United States military aircraft based in the United Kingdom since 17 May 1985 to date are as follows:
1985 None
1986 24 July 1986 A USAF RF-4C crashed into the sea in St. Brides Bay, South Wales.
1987 23 February 1987 A USAF F-111F crashed near Newmarket, Suffolk.
28 July 1987 A USAF F-111F crashed near Lauder, Berwickshire.
1988 22 December 1988 A USAF A10A crashed on approach to RAF Alconbury.
1989 4 April 1989 A USAF A10A crashed through the perimeter fence at RAF Alconbury *after landing*.
17 April 1989 A USAF A10A crashed near RAF Alconbury.
1990 5 February 1990 A USAF F-111E crashed into the sea near Wainfleet range.
6 February 1990 A USAF A10A crashed near Capel-y-Ffyn in Wales.
2 May 1990 An F-111 crashed near Wells-next-the-Sea in Norfolk.

Armed Forces

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement as to what forecasts he has made of the United Kingdom's armed strength for the late 1990s.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We are examining options for change in the structure and deployment of our armed forces but it is too early to forecast the results of this work.

RAF/USAF Bases

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the network of RAF/USAF co-located bases and their operational use.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The following Royal Air Force and procurement executive airfields in the United Kingdom are allocated for use as wartime co-located operating bases by United States forces:

Abingdon
Benson
Boscombe Down

Brawdy
Coltishall
Cottesmore
Finningley
Odiham
Scampton
Waddington
Wittering

RAF Wildenrath in Germany also holds co-located operating base status.

It is not our practice to comment on the operational plans for such bases.

RAF Fairford

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement as to the future use of RAF Fairford.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) on 12 February at column *119*.

United States Military Maintenance Bases

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the United States military maintenance bases in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The only United States facility entirely given over to maintenance tasks is the United States air force logistics command support group located at RAF Kemble.

United States Tactical Missiles

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with the United States Department of Defense in respect of how many of the 450 tactical (SRAM-T) missiles due to be deployed in Europe from 1995 will be based in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: While we have always made clear our support for retaining an up-to-date and effective United States nuclear presence in Europe, the question of the detailed deployment of US SRAM-T missiles has not yet arisen.

United States Intelligence Centre

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement as to the operational use of the United States joint (intelligence) analysis centre being re-located from Stuttgart to Molesworth.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) on 11 January at columns *691-92*.

Service Personnel

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list by sex and by year for the last 10 years the number of service personnel in *(a)* the Army; *(b)* the Royal Air Force and *(c)* the Royal Navy.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information is as follows:

Numbers of Service Personnel for each Service as at 31 March in each year from 1981

Year	*Royal Navy & Royal Marines*			*Army*			*Royal Air Force*		
	Total	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*
1981	74,273	70,202	4,071	165,990	159,401	6,589	93,492	87,219	6,273
1982	72,994	69,034	3,960	163,151	157,178	5,973	91,502	85,734	5,768
1983	71,727	67,826	3,901	159,069	152,925	6,144	89,827	84,453	5,374
1984	71,281	67,352	3,929	161,539	154,966	6,573	93,089	87,345	5,744
1985	70,393	66,687	3,706	162,399	155,628	6,771	93,425	87,475	5,950
1986	67,873	64,432	3,442	161,399	154,838	6,561	93,237	87,201	6,036
1987	66,536	63,167	3,369	159,686	153,206	6,480	93,627	87,278	6,349
1988	65,499	62,172	3,327	158,105	151,817	6,288	93,291	86,960	6,331
1989	64,639	61,189	3,450	155,567	149,062	6,505	91,443	85,144	6,299
1990	63,214	59,578	3,636	152,812	145,913	6,899	89,685	83,011	6,674

RAF Upper Heyford

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement as to the future role of RAF Upper Heyford.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The 20th tactical fighter wing of the United States air force based at RAF Upper Heyford forms an important part of NATO's longer-range strike capability. No decisions have been taken to change this role.

Eastern Europe

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement as to what financial savings are planned during the 1990s, following the political changes in eastern Europe.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We will continue to make available the resources necessary to sustain modern and well-equipped forces adequate for our security needs. We are examining options for change, and while we anticipate opportunities for reductions in some areas it is too early to say what savings might result and how soon they will arise.

Radiation

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence in which year neutron emission resulting in under-assessment of the radiation dose exposure equivalent of Coulport personnel from the Chevaline warhead during transportation or storage was first recorded; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: The under-assessment of the neutron and over-assessment of gamma components of radiation dose from Chevaline warheads in Coulport started in 1979. No one working in the nuclear weapon areas during the last 10 years will have a corrected annual dose greater than 20 per cent. of the annual dose limit.

Since the building environmental review plan in 1989, separate dosimeters have been introduced to monitor gamma and neutron radiation respectively.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the maximum total radiation dose registered in the Institute of Naval Medicine's records held at Alverstoke for any past or present Rosyth dockyard workers; for what period it was accrued; and what are the 20 highest doses recorded.

Mr. Neubert: The maximum lifetime total radiation dose for any past or present Rosyth dockyard worker registered in the defence radiological protection service's computerised record-keeping system is 597·75 mSv. This total dose accrued over the period 17 December 1964 to 30 November 1989.

The 20 highest radiation doses recorded for workers so registered are as follows:

Cumulative Radiation Exposures (mSv)

597·75
595·89
571·35
563·78
534·67
515·59
482·52
480·59
479·20
478·22
474·52
472·18
463·02
452·68
439·11
428·03
427·14
420·07
414·16
410·13

Radiation dose records for personnel leaving employment before 1979 are not held on computer compatible media, and therefore any large-scale analysis, even where possible, could be conducted only at disproportionate cost.

Military Pensions

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list British military pensions deriving from wartime service along with compatible information for other European countries.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Pensions are not awarded to members of Her Majesty's armed forces in respect of wartime service as such. Service personnel who suffer disability as a result of injuries attributable to their service, whether or not in time of war, may be awarded pensions under the provisions of the war pensions scheme administered by the Department of Social Security. These pensions are related to the degree of disability experienced. A range of supplements and additional allowances are also available under the scheme, subject to eligibility. Service personnel may also receive pensions under the provisions of the occupational schemes for the armed forces, provided that they meet the conditions of eligibility, including length of service given, which are appropriate to their service and the circumstances of its termination. No distinction is made between wartime service, and other periods of service, in determining eligibility and pension benefits. The Ministry of Defence is not in a position to list comparisons between the provisions made by the British Government and those of other European countries.

Equipment

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether he intends to continue with the development of *(a)* the battlefield artillery target engagement system, *(b)* the Trigat anti-tank missile system and *(c)* the airborne anti-armour weapon after 1990;

(2) whether he intends to continue to procure *(a)* the Foxhunter AI 24 radar and *(b)* the MLRS system after 1990.

Mr. Alan Clark: As I said to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Dr. Thomas) on 13 December 1989 at column *685*, we keep our investment in all weapons systems under constant review.

Manpower

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what consideration has been given to reducing the number of infantry battalions; and to what figure;

(2) what consideration has been given to reducing the number of surface fleet escorts; and to what figure;

(3) what assessment has been made of possible increases in the size of *(a)* the Parachute Regiment and *(b)* the Royal Marines.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Government remain committed to the strong defence of the United Kingdom and to meeting our NATO and out-of-area obligations and our future plans will reflect this aim. We have made it clear that the future structure of our armed forces will need to take account of international developments, including arms control. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has stated, we are examining options for change.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent examination of future levels of civilian staff employed by his Department has taken place.

Mr. Alan Clark: The levels of personnel employed by the Department, both service and civilian, are regularly monitored. Future staff levels are considered annually during the formulation of the long-term costing.

Shatterproof Glass

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the restrictions placed on capital spending by his Department include the programme for the installation of shatterproof glass on buildings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence has put in hand a £126 million programme of security enhancements specifically to counter terrorism. Some of this additional expenditure has been allocated to the provision of shatterproof window film. There has been no curtailment of this programme of enhancements.

Helicopters

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has any proposals to increase the number of helicopter flying hours per month for the Army in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not the practice to comment on operational matters. However, I can assure my hon. Friend that such matters are kept under constant review.

Service Pay, Northern Ireland

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give details of the annual pay rates for *(a)* an Ulster Defence Regiment private, permanent cadre, after two years' service, *(b)* an Ulster Defence Regiment private, part-time after two years' service and *(c)* a Regular Army private with two years' service serving in Northern Ireland on *(a)* six-month tour and *(b)* two-year posting.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Direct comparisons between the Ulster Defence Regiment (permanent cadre) pay structure and that of the Regular Army are difficult although neither pay scale provides for extra pay after two years' service as a matter of course. All Service men in Northern Ireland receive Northern Ireland additional pay when serving in Northern Ireland at the rate of £3·16 per day with effect from 1 April 1990 and £3·20 per day from 1 January 1991.

Illustrative annual rates of pay for private soldiers who are likely to have two years' service are as follows:

With effect from:	*1 April 1990* £	*1 January 1991* £
UDR (Permanent cadre)		
Private, A, Scale B	9,241·80	9,541·10
Regular Army (Infantry)		
Private, Class 1, Band 1, Scale B	8,705·25	8,946·15

Note: UDR private A and Regular Army private class 1 are both broadly equivalent in that they represent the most highly qualified in their rank and job.

There is no difference in basic pay between soldiers serving in Northern Ireland for six months and those for two-year periods.

A private soldier in the part-time element of the UDR will, after two years' service, receive pay at the rate of £22·30 per day. Service in the UDR (part-time) carries a minimum training/operational requirement and the amount of annual pay received will, therefore, depend on the actual number of days attended by each soldier.

In addition to pay, a soldier who completes the minimum obligatory training/duty and fulfils a number of other criteria, may qualify for payment of an annual bounty. Current rates are £565 on satisfactory completion of the second year of service and £800 for the third and subsequent years.

Disciplinary Proceedings

Mr. Nellist: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many service personnel have been subject to disciplinary proceedings for participation in anti-poll tax activities; what charges were laid and what sentences imposed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As far as we are aware, no service personnel have been subject to disciplinary proceedings as a result of anti-community charge activities. Service personnel may express their views as private individuals on matters such as the community charge provided their actions are lawful and do not contravene service regulations.

Genetically Modified Organisms

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will outline his policy in respect of the development and release of genetically modified organisms.

Mr. Neubert: It is not the Department's policy to release to the atmosphere any genetically modified organisms which may be developed in relation to research which underpins chemical and biological defence.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether any releases of genetically modified organisms have taken place from establishments under his Department's control.

Mr. Neubert: No.

Biological Warfare

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he has made an assessment of the offensive capability of genetically manipulated biological warfare and toxin warfare agents; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list those bacteria he is still considering as potential putative agents;

(3) what is the purpose of his Department's work with Q fever; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to his question on 23 April 1990 at column *76*.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the dangers to personnel from working with genetically manipulated biological warfare and toxin warfare agents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to his question on 23 April 1990 at column *76*.

In the handling of any materials in these categories, the Department follows the strict assessment criteria and protocols advised by the independent advisory committee on genetic manipulation, as well as according with the regulations covering the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health and the Genetic Manipulation Regulations 1989.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the need of states intending to develop a nuclear weapons capability to conduct nuclear test explosions.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Such matters are kept under review by the Ministry of Defence. However, different countries take different routes to the development of nuclear weapons and it is not possible to generalise regarding the technologies or methods which may be involved.

Beaufort Dyke Sea Dump

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what materials have been dumped by his Department's personnel from any service in the Beaufort Dyke sea dump in each year since 1980; whether any materials from this dump have subsequently been recovered elsewhere; and if he will make a statement on future dumping in this area.

Mr. Neubert: None. My Department has no knowledge of the migration of materials dumped at this site being recovered elsewhere. The MOD has no plans to use Beaufort Dyke for the disposal of any material.

Mr. Colin Wallace

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the relevant papers referred to in the written reply of 30 January, *Official Report*, column *112*, include any papers of the Security Service; and whether representatives of Colin Wallace will be given access to all papers considered by the inquiry.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Mr. Calcutt has access to all papers relevant to his inquiry, and will consider what papers he judges Mr. Wallace and his representatives should see. We shall be guided by his advice.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Calcutt inquiry announced on 30 January, *Official Report*, column *112*, will be taking evidence from *(a)* Len Garrett, *(b)* Sir Peter Leng, *(c)* Denis Payne, *(d)* Jeremy Railton, *(e)* Penny Sadler, *(f)* Bernard Sheldon or *(g)* John Waterfield; and whether it will be open to representatives of Colin Wallace to cross-examine witnesses.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: These matters are for Mr. Calcutt.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what response he has made to the letter of Mr. Colin Wallace to him about his statement on the report into how papers were overlooked in the case of Colin Wallace; and if he will put copies of the correspondence in the Library.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has received Mr. Wallace's letter of 18 May, which he is considering.

Cash Limits

Mr. Fishburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he can announce any changes to the defence cash limits for 1990-91.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Subject to parliamentary aproval of the necessary summer supplementary estimates, the following changes will be made:

Defence cash limits

Class and Vote	*Current cash limit £'000s*	*Increase/ decrease £'000s*	*Revised cash limit £'000s*
I, 2	8,482,308	+48,900	8,531,208
I, 4	1,875,960	+55,000	1,930,960

These changes total an additional £103,900,000. Of this sum, £110,000,000 is an increase to the defence budget in respect of the special payments to pre-1973 war widows (announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on 11 December 1989, *Official Report*, columns 677 and 678). Funding for these special payments was included in supply estimates 1990-91 in class I, vote 3 (as announced on 30 March 1990, *Official Report*, column *329*), but total class I provision was not increased over that announced in the autumn statement and detailed in the public expenditure White Paper (Cm. 1001). These increases will be charged to the reserve and they will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

The changes also take account of a transfer of £6,100,000 to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (class II, vote 2) from class I, vote 2 to cover the provision of military assistance to the Government of Portugal.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research and inquiries his Department is undertaking in respect of bovine spongiform encephalopathy symptoms in *(a)* cats, *(b)* mink and *(c)* other animals.

Mr. Maclean: Following is the reply:

(a) The clinical symptoms of spongiform encephalopathy in cats are being recorded by veterinary clinicians to whom possible cases are presented for examination. The Ministry can provide histopathological diagnosis if requested to do so.

(b) Studies of the transmissibility of BSE to mink are being planned in collaboration with researchers in the USA. The clinical symptoms of the disease in mink will be recorded, should transmission occur.

(c) The Ministry is undertaking research into the clinicopathology of BSE. Information describing the clinical symptoms of the disease has been published.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will take urgent steps to ban the removal of cattle brains from crania by means of a modified paint spray gun that mixes water and compressed air; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will take urgent steps to ban the removal of cattle brains from crania by means of a high-power water jet; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Cattle which show signs of BSE, or are suspected of having the disease, are slaughtered and do not go for human consumption. The ban on brains and other specified offal is an ultra-precautionary measure applying to clinically healthy animals.

Nevertheless, we are aware of concerns about particular methods of brain removal. Wherever possible, head meat should be removed before the skull is opened. We have conducted studies into the methods employed for removing brains where this is not feasible. These indicate that high-pressure water and/or air jets should not be used as other, more satisfactory, techniques are available. I have asked the Tyrrell committee to review our findings before guidance is issued. I shall consider whether any further action is desirable having regard to the committee's advice. In the meantime, the state veterinary service is ready to give advice if needed.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has instigated any research into the possible connection between bovine spongiform encephalopathy and the chemical reaction between aluminium and organophosphates in the soil; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Epidemiological studies conducted by the Ministry have found no connection beween BSE and the use of treatments or agricultural chemicals.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the manufacturers that his

Department have discovered have supplied contaminated food products to farmers that could cause bovine spongiform encephalopathy in their cattle.

Mr. Maclean: Epidemiological studies have shown that the most likely cause of BSE is the feeding of ruminant rations which included material derived from scrapie-infected sheep.

All such feed used prior to the ruminant feed ban must be considered as a potential vehicle for the agent which caused the disease.

Environmental Payments

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether his Department has given any consideration to supporting the inclusion of environmental payments within the hill livestock compensatory allowance scheme.

Mr. Maclean: My right hon. Friend the Minister announced in the House on 30 January at column 160 that, following changes in the European Community regulation, we would see whether the significant contribution that hill livestock compensatory allowances already provide in terms of environmental benefits should be made more specific. This work is proceeding.

Sheep Variable Premium

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food by what date he intends to announce the termination of the sheep variable premium.

Mr. Maclean: We are currently consulting interested organisations on the phasing-out of the sheep variable premium scheme which, under the terms of the reformed EC sheepmeat regime, must end by the beginning of the 1993 marketing year at the latest. I am well aware of the need to give good notice of any changes to the arrangements.

Lambs

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if his Department will launch an independent assessment scheme for lambs under the Meat and Livestock Commission to ensure orderly marketing and an effective price reporting system.

Mr. Maclean: The Meat and Livestock Commission currently undertakes extensive price reporting activities as part of its involvement in the administration of the sheep variable premium scheme. Under the reformed EC sheepmeat regime, this scheme will be phased out by the beginning of the 1993 marketing year at the latest. New price reporting arrangements will be introduced under the reformed regime, but the EC Commission is yet to come forward with specific proposals. It will be our objective to ensure that the new arrangements are effective.

Milk Quotas

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will introduce a scheme to enable young farmers to lease milk quota allocation from the Government.

Mr. Curry: As the Minister said in his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) on 2 April at column *447*, we had hoped to introduce a scheme to loan milk quota to new entrants, but the Commission ruled that there is at present no basis in Community law for such a scheme. It was unwilling to propose the necessary changes at this time but may be prepared to consider the possibility of helping young farmers in this way in the context of the general review of the quota system due next year. We shall be pressing it to do so.

Straw and Stubble Burning

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his policy in respect of exemptions to the proposed general ban on straw and stubble burning; and if he has made an estimate of what percentage of material burnt in 1989 will be permitted to be burnt after the general ban comes into force.

Mr. Maclean: Exemptions to the proposed ban will be made by order and will be strictly limited. They may be either permanent, for example for linseed, a crop residue which is extremely difficult to incorporate in the soil, or temporary, applying only in particularly difficult seasons in particular areas and possibly restricted to particular crop residues, in circumstances when I am satisfied that there is no practical alternative to burning. It is impossible to forecast when the combinations of circumstances might arise that would justify the granting of such exemptions.

Hunting Hounds

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many hunting hounds are known to have died from ataxia for each of the last 10 years;

(2) what research he has undertaken to establish the reasons for the increase in deaths of hunting hounds from hound ataxia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Since ataxia in hunting hounds is not a notifiable disease, no official statistics are available on deaths resulting from it.

The Department is not currently undertaking any research into hound ataxia.

Arctic Foxes

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food where he obtained the 1987 figures for the numbers of Arctic fox factory farms in England and Wales.

Mr. Maclean: Information on fur farms was collected in 1987 from representatives of the industry for the reviews of the 1982 mink and coypu keeping orders.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will enact similar provisions to those in the Northern Ireland Arctic Fox Keeping Order for the rest of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maclean: The Ministry is considering whether controls on the keeping of destructive non-indigenous animals should be extended to Arctic fox and other species. A long and expensive campaign has saved the Broads from destruction by the coypu and we would not want another destructive pest species to escape and become established in Britain.

Research and Development

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has received the third report from the Priorities Board for Research and Development in Agriculture and Food; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The Priorities Board for Research and Development in Agriculture and Food has submitted its third report to the Agriculture Ministers and to the chairman of the Agricultural and Food Research Council. We greatly appreciate the work which Dr. Brian Smith and the members of the board have put into their report.

The report gives advice to the sponsors about future resource allocations and priorities for the publicly funded agricultural and food research and development effort as a whole. It also discusses a number of matters related to the research and development programme. The board supports the Government's aims to encourage industry to take a greater responsibility for funding near market research and development. This will produce changes to the balance and content of the sponsors' research programmes, which the board has taken into account in making its recommendations on future resource allocations. These changes have also persuaded the board to reclassify the Government's agricultural and food research programme into four categories: natural resources, plants, animals and food. The report recommends that the allocation of expenditure to each sector should be as follows:

	Per cent.
Natural resources	12
Plants	34·5
Animals	38·5
Food	15

The sponsors are agreed that, subject to a full consideration of the resource implications, the recommendations should guide the allocation of resources to the future research and development programme. Discussions will be held between the sponsors to plan the implementation of the recommendations.

The sponsors have also agreed that the report should be published. This is now being arranged and advance copies are being placed in the Library of the House.

Agriculture Council

Mr. Butler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the Brussels Agriculture Council held on 21 and 22 May.

Mr. Curry: I represented the United Kingdom at this meeting.

I drew attention to the need for the Community to prepare for the agricultural consequences of German monetary union on 2 July and of German unification thereafter. The Commission undertook to make proposals as appropriate and to put forward a report for the next meeting of the Council.

At my suggestion, it was agreed that the potential consequences for agriculture of the draft proposal to protect water from nitrate pollution currently before the Environment Council should be assessed and reported on by agricultural experts. This will help the Environment Council to reach informed decisions on this matter.

On foot and mouth disease a large majority of member states indicated that they were now prepared to harmonise controls on the basis of a slaughter policy, as currently applied in the United Kingdom, rather than a vaccination policy, as currently applied in most continental member states. This represents a significant step towards resolving satisfactorily one potentially difficult problem posed by the single European market.

Ewe Premium

Mr. Amos: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will announce the final rate of ewe premium for the 1989 scheme.

Mr. Curry: I am pleased to say that the European Commission has now set the final rate of ewe premium for the 1989 scheme. The rates per eligible ewe are £6·94 in Great Britain and £12·78 in Northern Ireland, and £5·55 for those animals (Herdwicks and specified breeds of untupped gimmers in parts of Scotland) for which there are special arrangements and which would not otherwise qualify for premium. Producers in less-favoured areas who have already received an advance payment will now be paid the balance, while producers in other areas will receive the full final rate. Payments will be made as soon as possible. The 1989 premium will be worth in total around £140 million to United Kingdom sheep producers, which represents a very significant input to the sheep industry.

Cash Limits

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether it is intended to change the cash limit on any departmental vote for which he has responsibility.

Mr. Curry: Yes. Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class III, vote 4 (other agricultural and food services and support for the fishing industry) will be increased by £2,411,000 from £154,960,000 to £157,371,000 to make provision for payments to the British Society for Horticultural Research. The increase will be fully offset by a corresponding reduction to the cash limit for class III, vote 5 from £287,507,000 to £285,096,000 and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure. The Department's running costs limit will be decreased by £795,000 from £292,837,000 to £292,042,000.

As I announced to the House on 17 October 1989 at column 97, the British Society for Horticultural Research will carry out commissioned research and development on behalf of the Ministry. This work will be funded from class III, vote 4. The reduction in expenditure for class III, vote 5 reflects the savings accruing from the consequential reduction of in-house research and development, and increased receipts for this vote cover the attachment of Ministry staff and facilities to the BSHR.

Furs (Factory Farming)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has made an assessment of the implications for animal welfare of the procedures carried out in factory farming for furs.

Mr. Maclean: The Farm Animal Welfare Council has undertaken an assessment of fur farming and made a statement of its findings on 4 April 1989.

In addition, officers of the state veterinary service make visits to fur farmes as they do to other livestock farms to undertake welfare inspections. At these visits, the accommodation and management practices are taken into account when assessing the welfare of the animals.

Food Standards Agency

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will set up an independent food standards agency.

Mr. Maclean: I have no plans to do so.

Crown Estates Commission

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will introduce legislation to require the Crown Estates Commission to publish minutes of all meetings and publish all working papers which lead to major policy decisions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: I have been asked to reply.

No. I am satisfied that the provisions of the Crown Estate Act 1961 provide the necessary level of accountability for the Crown Estate Commissioners.

Beef

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will agree to meet representatives from Mid Glamorgan county council to discuss the consumption of beef.

Mr. David Hunt: I have been asked to reply.

My Department has sent detailed information on this matter to the council. That information is both comprehensive and clear, and there is no need for such a meeting.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 5 June 1990

NORTHERN IRELAND

Old Cross, Newtownards

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the restoration scheme of the Old Cross, Newtownards is completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The work was completed on 30 May 1990.

Anglo-Irish Agreement (Secretariat)

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what nationality the present head of the British delegation at the Anglo-Irish Agreement secretariat at Maryfield has.

Mr. Brooke: The present head of the British side of the Anglo-Irish secretariat is a British citizen, as are all other members of the British side.

Aliens

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many aliens are currently registered with the Royal Ulster Constabulary under the Immigration (Registration with Police) Regulations 1972, as amended.

Mr. Cope: A total of 552 as at 24 May 1990.

Wetlands

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether, with regard to the Ramsar convention on the conservation of wetlands of international importance, Her Majesty's Government are required to designate sites under the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands Order 1985 prior to designation under the Ramsar convention.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It is not a requirement of the Ramsar convention that wetland sites of international importance should be designated under the Nature Conservation and Amenity Lands (Northern Ireland) Order 1985 prior to designation under the Ramsar convention. It is United Kingdom Government policy to declare Ramsar sites after the areas have been given full protection under domestic legislation.

Development (Castlereagh East)

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many development projects are under construction without final planning permission in the electoral area of Castlereagh East; on what date each case came to his attention; on what date he made representations to each offending developer; and what action he has proposed in each case.

Mr. Needham: None.

Grant-aided Schools

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many schools in Northern Ireland are grant-aided.

Dr. Mawhinney: A total of 1,344.

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many schools in Northern Ireland do not receive grant aid; and on what grounds these schools fail to qualify for grant aid.

Dr. Mawhinney: There are presently 19 independent schools registered with the Department of Education. These schools have been established outside the grant-aided system and so, by definition, do not receive assistance from public funds. The question of failing to qualify for grant aid does not therefore arise.

North Eastern Education and Library Board

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish relevant references to the North Eastern education and library board from the Roy report into the financial end of maintenance.

Dr. Mawhinney: I assume that the hon. Gentleman is referring to the report of the examination in late 1985 into practices and procedures in the engineering section of the North Eastern education and library board's architect's department. This report was commissioned by the board and presented to the board in 1985. The question of publication is therefore a matter for the board.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Anton Piller Orders

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Attorney-General whether he has any plans to review and propose amendments to the operation of Anton Piller orders; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Clause 3 of the Courts and Legal Services Bill will allow a county court to make any order available in the High Court, subject to prescribed exceptions; but the Lord Chancellor intends to bring forward regulations under this clause in general restricting the power to grant Anton Piller orders to High Court judges.

Departmental Savings

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Attorney-General what were the value-for-money savings in the Law Officers' Department's operations identified by internal audit and internal efficiency arrangements and by external audit and by management consultants retained by his Department between 1983-84 and 1988-89; and what is the amount of those savings fulfilled to date.

The Attorney-General: In the Treasury Solicitor's Department and the legal secretariat to the Law Officers the improvements resulting from inquiries and studies of the kind the hon. Gentleman mentions are taken into account in the setting of annual budgets and internal targets.

The Crown prosecution service was not created until 1986-87 and up to 1988-89 audit and consultants were mainly concerned with the setting up of effective systems for the service. Value-for-money savings identified and achieved on total running cost expenditure of £90 million in 1988-89 were small, but included purchasing savings estimated at £210,000.

The Serious Fraud Office became fully operational only in April 1988, and no such savings had been specifically identified during the period ending 31 March 1989.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Attorney-General what mechanisms exist in the Law Officers' Departments for identifying and tracking value-for-money savings in their operations.

The Attorney-General: In the Treasury Solicitor's Department and the legal secretariat to the Law Officers the mechanisms for identifying and tracking value-for-money savings include internal audit and staff inspection. In the Crown prosecution service they include internal audit, staff inspection, a system of performance indicators, returns from operational areas to HQ for public expenditure survey and estimates purposes, investment appraisal of information technology and capital projects, purchasing information systems, and monitoring by a new field directorate.

The Serious Fraud Office became fully operational only in April 1988, and work is still in progress to develop performance indicators and other work measurement procedures to assist in identifying and achieving value-for-money savings.

THE ARTS

Public Libraries

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he has any plans to increase funding of public libraries.

Mr. Luce: The Government do not plan local authority spending on public libraries or on other services. Revenue support grant is paid in support of local authorities revenue expenditure generally. Within the "Other Services" block, local authorities estimate a total spend on public libraries of £488 million in 1990-91, an estimated increase of 4 per cent. over 1989-90.

Cryptogramic Botany

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Minister of the Arts (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the remit of the diatom section of the department of cryptogramic botany in the British Museum (Natural History);

(2) what assessment he has made of the consequences for current work on atmospheric pollution of the closure of the diatom section of the department of cryptogramic botany of the British Museum (Natural History);

(3) if he will list the recent research achievements of the publications produced by the diatom section of the department of cryptogramic botany in the British Museum (Natural History).

Mr. Luce: I understand that there has never been a separate department of cryptogramic botany at the Natural History Museum, but always a single department of botany. I am also informed that future work on diatoms is planned as follows:

(a) *Curation.* Maintaining the collections and making them available to research workers worldwide. The museum recognises that it holds the finest collection of diatoms in the world, and it is vital that it is available for use by workers undertaking both environmental studies and basic research.

(b) *Advisory Services.* Assistance will continue to be given to researchers requiring advice on identification and associated literature.

(c) *Research.* Within the overall umbrella of the science departments, research on all protista (including diatoms) will be continued, but with a remit to examine inter-relationships between the different members of the group, to undertake marine stratigraphical analysis and to provide taxonomic information for the assessment of water quality in relation to ground-water studies and sewage treatment.

In addition, I understand that work on atmospheric pollution has been undertaken primarily in universities and has concentrated on examining the acidification of freshwater bodies. The Natural History Museum has acted either in an advisory capacity or has made the collections available for examination. The museum will continue to support such activities.

I understand that recent achievements in diatom research have been predominately taxonomic, including descriptions of new species and revisions at the family and generic level. This has included the development of new approaches to evolutionary studies of diatoms based on the interpretation of molecular data, which has indicated new ways of examining fundamental questions regarding the protista. This work is being expanded into a more general review of phylogeny of the group.

I detail in the table the 53 publications produced by the Natural History Museum diatom section since 1985.

Publications of the diatom section of the Natural History Museum 1985-1990.

Paddock, T. B. B. (1985). Observations and comments on the diatoms *Surirella fastuosa* and *Campylodiscus fastuosus* and on other species of similar appearance. *Nova Hedwigia* 41: 417-444.

Paddock, T. B. B. (1986). Observations on the genus *Stauropsis* Meunier and related species. *Diatom Research* 1: 89-98.

Paddock, T. B. B. (1988), *Plagiotropis* Pfitzer and *Tropidoneis* Cleve, a summary account. *Bibliotheca Diatomologica*, 16, 152pp, 38 pls.

Kemp, K. D. and Paddock, T. B. B. (1988). Observations on the diatom genus *Stigmaphora* G. C. Wallich and two species of *Mastogloia* Thwaites ex W. Smith. In: F. E. Round (Editor), Proceedings of the 9th International Diatom Symposium, Koenigstein & Biopress Ltd, Bristol.

Paddock, T. B. B. (1988). A description of some new species of the diatom genus *Mastogloia* Thwaites ex Wm. Smith with further observations on *M. elegans* Lewis and *M. goessii* (Cleve) Cleve. *Diatom Research*, 3: 109-121.

Paddock, T. B. B. and Sims, P. A. (1988). Micromorphology and evolution of the keels of raphe-bearing diatoms. *Systematics Assiociation Special Volume*

Kemp, K. D. and Paddock, T. B. B. (1989). Chambers within the valve of *Diadema*, gen. nov. *Diatom Research*, 4: 39-45.

Goldman, N., Paddock, T. B. B. and Shaw, K. M. (1990). Quantitative analysis of shape variation in populations of *Surirella fastuosa*. *Diatom Research*, 5.

Hasle, G. R. and Sims, P. A. (1985). The morphology of the diatom resting spores *Syringidium bicorne* and *Syringidium simplex*. *British Phycological Journal*, 20: 219-225.

Ross, R. and Sims, P. A. (1985). Some genera of the Biddulphiacea (diatoms) with interlocking linking spines. *Bulletin of the British Museum (Natural History) (Botany)* 13: 277-381.

Fryxell, G. A., Sims, P. A. and Watkins, T. P. (1986). *Azpeitia* (Bacillariophyceae): related genera and promorphology. *Systematic Botany Monographs* 13, 74pp.

Hasle, G. R. and Sims, P. A. (1986). The diatom genus *Stellarima* and *Symbolophora* with comments on the genus *Actinoptychus*. *British Phycological Journal* 21: 97-114.

Schoemam, F. R. and Archibald, R. E. M. and Sims, P. A. (1986). Observations on *Amphora* species (Bacillariophyceae) in the British Museum (Natural History). IV. Some species from the subgenus *Diplamphora* Cleve. *Cryptoganie, Algologie* 7: 9-21.

Hasle, G. R. and Sims, P. A. (1986). The diatom genus *Coscinodiscus* Ehrenb. *C. argus* Ehrenb. and *C. radiatus* Ehrenb. *Botanica Marina* 29: 305-318.

Sims, P. A. (1986). *Sphynctolethus* Hanna, *Ailuretta* gen nov., and evolutionary trends within the Hemiauloideae, *Diatom Research* 1: 241-269.

Ross, R. and Sims, P. A. (1987) Further genera of the Biddulphiaceae (diatoms) with interlocking linking spines. *Bulletin of the British Museum (Natural History) (Botany)* 16: 269-311.

Hendey, N. I. and Sims, P. A. (1987). Examination of some fossil Eupodiscoid diatoms with descriptions of two new species of *Craspedoporus* Greville. *Diatom Research* 2: 23-34.

Sims, P. A. and Hasle, G. R. (1987). Two Cretaceous *Stellarima* species: *S. steinyi* and *S. distincta*; their morphology, palaeogeography and phylogeny. *Diatom Research* 2: 229-240.

Hasle, G. R., Sims, P. A. and Syvertsen, E. E. (1988). Two recent *Stellarima* species: *S. microtrias* and *S. stellaris* (Bacillariophyceae). *Botanica marina*, 31: 195-206.

Sims, P. A. and Ross, R. (1988). Some Cretaceous and Paleogene *Trinacria* (diatom) species. *Bull. Br. Mus. nat. Hist. (Bot.)*, 18: 275-322.

Sims, P. A. (1988). The fossil genus *Trochosira*, its morphology, taxonomy and systematics. *Diatom Research*, 3: 245-257.

see also Paddock, T. B. B. and Sims, P. A. (1988).

Sims, P. A. (1989). Some cretaceous and paleocene species of *Coscinodiscus*: A micromorphological and systematic analysis. *Diatom Research*, 4: 351-371.

Sims, P. A., Fryxell, G. A. and Baldauf, J. G. (1989). Critical examination of the diatom genus *Azpeitia*: Species useful as stratigraphic markers for the Oligocene and Miocene epochs. *Micropaleontology*, 35: 293-307.

Sims, P. A. and Hasle, G. R. (1990). The formal establishment of the family Stellarimaceae Nikolaev ex Sims and Hasle. *Diatom Research*, 5.

Sims, P. A. and Ross, R. (1990). *Triceratium pulvinar* and *T. unguiculatum*, two confused species. *Diatom Research*, 5.

Hendey, N. I. and Sims, P. A. (In press). Some observations on variation in the valve structure of *Asterolampra schmidtii* Hajos, a useful stratigraphic marker for the early Oligocene. *Nova Hedwigia, Beih.*

Crawford, R. M. and Sims, P. A. (1990). The morphology and taxonomy of the centric diatom genus *Paralia*. *Paralia siberica* comb. nov. *Diatom Research*, 5.

Sims, P. A. (1990). The fossil diatom genus *Fenestrella*, its morphology, systematics and palaeogeography. *Nova Hedwigia, Beih.*

Williams, D. M. (1985). Morphology, taxonomy and inter-relationships of the ribbed Araphid diatoms from the genera *Diatoma* and *Meridion* (Diatomaceae: Bacillariophyta). *Bibliotheca Diatomologica* 8: 1-228.

Williams, D. M. (1985). Bacillariophyta. In:— Observations on the phytobenthos of the freshwater Thames. II. The floristic composition and distribution of the smaller algae using artificial surfaces. *Arch. Hydrobiol.* 103: 95-96.

Hartley, B. (1986). [In collaboration with Ross, R. and Williams, D. M.] A check-list of the freshwater brackish and marine diatoms of the British Isles and adjoining coastal waters. *Journal of the Marine Biological Association, U.K.* 66: 531-610.

Williams, D. M. (1986). Comparative morphology of some species of *Synedra* with a new definition of the genus. *Diatom Research* 1: 131-152.

Williams, D. M. (1986). Proposal to conserve the generic name *Tetracyclus* against *Biblarium* (Bacillariophyta). *Taxon* 35: 730-731.

Williams, D. M. and Round, F. E. (1986). Revision of the genus *Synedra Ehrenb, Diatom Research* 1: 313-339.

Kociolek, J. P. and Williams, D. M. (1987). Unicell ontogeny and phylogeny: examples from the diatoms. *Cladistics* 3: 274-284.

Williams, D. M. and Round, F. E. (1987). Revision of the genus *Fragilaria*. *Diatom Research* 2: 267-288.

Williams, D. M. (1987). Observations on the genus *Tetracyclus* Ralfs (Bacillariophyta) I. Valve and girdle structure of the extant species. *Brit. J. phycol.* 22: 383-399.

Williams, D. M. and Round, F. E. (1988). Phylogenetic Systematics of *Synedra*. In: F. E. Round (Editor), Proceedings of the 9th International Diatom Synposium, Koenigstein and Biopress Ltd., Bristol.

Williams, D. M. (1988). *Tabulariopsis*, a new genus of marine araphid diatom, with notes on the taxonomy of *Tabularia* Williams et Round. *Nova Hedwigia*, 47: 247-254.

Williams D. M. (1988). An illustrated catalogue of the type specimens in the Greville diatom herbarium. *Bull. Br. Mus. nat. Hist. (Bot.)*, 18: 1-148.

Williams, D. M., B. Hartley, S. Juggins, R. Ross, M. Munro and R. W. Battarbeee. (1988). *A coded check-list of British diatoms*, Ensis Publishers.

Williams, D. M. and F. E. Round. (1988). *Fragilariforma*, nom. nov., a new generic name for *Neofragilaria* Williams and Round. *Diatom Research* 3: 265-266.

Williams, D. M. (1989). *Cavitatus* D. M. Williams, nov. gen.: A new genus of fossil diatom (Bacillariophyta) based on *Synedra jouseana* Sheshukova-Poretskaya. *Rev. Palaeobot. Palynol.*, 58: 357-362.

Williams D. M. (1989). Publication of new and revised taxa: A guide to the International Code of Botanical nomenclatural. *J. Palaeolimnol.*, 2: 55-59.

Williams, D. M. (1989). Observations on the genus *Tetracyclus* Ralfs (Bacillariophyta) II. Morphology and taxonomy of some species from the genus *Stylobiblium*. *Brit. phycol J.*, 24: 317-327

Kociolek, J. P., Theriot, E. C. and Williams, D. M. (1989). Inferring diatom phylogeny: A cladistic perspective. *Diatom Research*, 4: 289-300.

Williams, D. M., R. W. Scotland, and S. Blackmore. (1990). Is there a direct ontogenetic criterion in systematics? *Biol. J. Linn. Soc.*, 39: 99-108.

Williams, D. M. and Li Jiaying. (1990). Observations on the genus *Tetracyclus* Ralfs (Bacillariophyta) III. Description of two new species from Chinese fossil deposits. *Brit. phycol J.*.

Williams, D. M. (1990). Examination of auxospore valves in *Tetracyclus* from fossil specimens and the establishment of their identity. *Diatom Research*, 5.

Williams, D. M. (1990). *Distrionella* D. M. Williams, nov. gen. a new araphid diatom genus related to *Diatoma* Bory. *Arch. Protist.*, 138.

Williams, D. M. (1990). Cladistic analysis of some freshwater araphid diatoms with particular reference to *Diatoma* and *Meridion*. *Plant Syst. Evol.*

Williams. D. M. (1990). Phylogenetic relationships among the Chromista: A review and preliminary analysis. *Cladistics*.

Williams. D. M. Submitted. Phylogenies in the algal kingdom Chronista: Evidence from molecular data. *Mol. Evol. Biol.*

British Library

Sir Hal Miller: To ask the Minister for the Arts what is to be the future of the new British Library at St. Pancras.

Mr. Luce: I announced yesterday that the exercise to design a concluding phase to the new British Library building at St. Pancras within £90 million at 1988 prices has been successfully achieved. Construction of some elements of the completion phase will commence almost immediately and the whole will be ready for occupation in 1996.

Included in the design is a magnificent new setting for George III's "King's Library" in a six storey glass-fronted bookcase set in the focal point of the building, where it will be visible from all sides. A model and artist's impressions of the completed building will be on display in the summer

exhibition of the Royal Academy. For the next few months, there will also be an exhibition in the portico of the building at the St. Pancras site.

The authorised cost of the completion phase will in cash terms be about £150 million, which includes allowances for inflation. Together with the £300 million already authorised for the first phase of the building currently under construction, this will bring the total cost of the British Library project to about £450 million. This clearly demonstrates the Government's continued dedication to excellence in the arts. The funding of the new British Library at St. Pancras does not have any effect on Government funding of the remainder of the arts.

The British Library will start to move books into the basement bookstacks at St. Pancras by the middle of 1991, the first reading room will open in early 1993 and the first phase of the building will be operational by the middle of 1993. The completed building will be fully operational by mid-1996 and the board of the British Library has confirmed that it will meet the library's key requirements.

Natural History Museum

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister for the Arts what are the admission figures for the Natural History Museum for any convenient period since 1 January.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 23 May 1990]:* I am advised that the monthly admission figures for the Natural History Museum since 1 January 1990 are as follows:-

	Number
January	86,200
February	153,000
March	103,000
April	128,000

Gelman Collection

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Minister for the Arts what assessment he has made of the possibility of the Gelman collection currently on show at the Royal Academy staying in Britain.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 24 May 1990]:* I understand from the Royal Academy, which has been responsible for the arrangement for the current exhibition, that the Gelman collection has proved to be very popular and will be shown until 15 July. I was pleased to cover the insurance requirements under my Government indemnity scheme. Any further arrangements will, of course, be a matter for the owner of the collection, Mrs. Gelman.

CIVIL SERVICE

Agencies

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service whether there have been any additions to the list of candidates for agency status in the last five months.

Mr. Luce: During the last five months two new activities, social security contributions and the Chessington computer centre, have been added to the list of candidates for agency status. In the same period 21 candidates from the list have been set up as agencies. There are now 31 established agencies and 24 announced candidates. The project manager will continue to work with Departments to identify other suitable candidates.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service if there have been any new agencies set up since he last reported to the House; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I am pleased to announce that since I last reported to the House the Ordnance Survey has been launched as an executive agency. This brings the total set up to 31, covering nearly 70,000 staff.

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service when he expects that the current list of candidates for agency status will have been converted into agencies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: Target dates for the establishment of announced candidates as executive agencies are a matter for the Minister concerned. However, generally we continue to make good progress in implementing this initiative and I would expect that by the end of 1991 "next steps" will have been applied to at least half the civil service.

Departmental Savings

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what mechanisms exist in the OMCS for identifying and tracking value-for-money savings in its operations.

Mr. Luce: The search for year-on-year efficiency gains is an integral part of the OMCS annual planning and budgeting exercise. The system also allows for regular monitoring of progress towards targets, and their achievement.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Minister for the Civil Service what were the value-for-money savings in his Department's operations identified by internal audit and internal efficiency arrangements by external audit and by management consultants retained by his Department between 1983-84 and 1988-89; and what is the amount of those savings fulfilled to date.

Mr. Luce: The identification of value-for-money targets is an integral part of the annual OMCS planning and budgeting exercise even though those targets have not always been expressed in purely financial terms. Value-for-money improvements, including purchasing savings, of £3·015 million have been achieved between 1985-86 and 1988-89, although it is not possible to identify the separate contributions made by each of the means of study mentioned.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Education Conference, Thailand

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement regarding the conclusions made at, and outcome of, the world conference on education for all, held in Thailand on 5 to 9 March.

Mrs. Chalker: The ultimate goal affirmed by the world declaration on education for all is to meet the basic learning needs of all children, youth and adults. Countries have been advised of a variety of interim targets towards this end taking account of local circumstances. The

conference was a constructive one with a general emphasis on the importance of the role of education throughout the whole range of social, technical and economic development. The World Bank, the United Nations international children's emergency fund, and the United Nations development programme, to all of which her Majesty's Government are a major contributor, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation have all agreed to increase support for education especially at the basic level.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what commitment Her Majesty's Government have made towards achieving the goals of basic primary education for every child, and reducing worldwide levels of illiteracy in response to the world conference on education for all held in Thailand in March; what is the current funding for such goals; and what intention there is to increase funding for these purposes.

Mrs. Chalker: In addition to the use of its contributions to the World Bank, the United Nations international children's emergency fund and the United Nations development programme, Her Majesty's Government are ready to respond to the wishes of developing country Governments, who are themselves responsible for deciding the priority they wish to give to expenditure on basic education in relation to other priorities they may have.

In 1988, the latest year for which final figures are available, £6·5 million of capital aid from our bilateral aid programme was spent on education, with £1·1 million specifically on primary education. In the same year further expenditure on technical co-operation (for example staff, training and books) and including some £45 million provided to the British Council, was about £95 million, with £2·6 million specifically for primary education and adult literacy. Help given across the whole spectrum of education by, for example, the provision of key personnel in a Ministry of Education, will have a considerable effect on individual sectors. It is likely that the consequences of the conference on education for all will, by encouraging developing country Governments to give higher priority to basic education, enable us to expand more easily our bilateral support for primary education and adult literacy programmes, the latter with a particular emphasis on education for women.

Tropical Forestry Action Plan

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the tropical forestry action plan was last reviewed at a meeting of Economic Community Development Ministers; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: On 29 May, European Community Development Ministers discussed the preservation, rehabilitation and sustainable development of tropical forests, including the role of the tropical forestry action plan. The final resolution welcomed the review of the TFAP now under way, and at my suggestion was amended to ensure that at a future meeting Ministers will consider the results of the review and how the TFAP can be made more effective.

PRIME MINISTER

Cyprus

Q75. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Prime Minister what plans she has to meet the Prime Minister of Greece to discuss the current situation in Cyprus.

The Prime Minister: I reviewed the situation in Cyprus with Mr. Mitsotakis, the Prime Minister of Greece, during his working visit to London on 16 May.

European Council

Q147. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Prime Minister what issues she intends to raise at the next meeting of the European Council; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I expect discussion of a range of issues, including developments in eastern and central Europe, the 1992 single market programme, institutional questions, and co-operation on drugs and the environment.

Engagements

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 June.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 June.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 5 June.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Secretary of State for Energy

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list the full duties of the Secretary of State for Energy in April 1990; and what additional responsibilities have now been given to him.

The Prime Minister: In April 1990 the Secretary of State for Energy had overall responsibility for the work of the Department of Energy. He now has additional responsibility for co-ordinating the development of the presentation of Government policies.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister what are to be the new cross-departmental co-ordination functions of the Secretary of State for Energy; how many civil servants will assist him in this work; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) on 24 May at column *286*.

Plutonium

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Prime Minister whether there have been any periods of defence plutonium production subsequent to that mentioned in her reply to the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) of 19

February 1985, *Official Report*, columns 406-07; and whether the policy outlined in her answer continues to be that of Her Majesty's Government.

The Prime Minister: The policy of Her Majesty's Government remains unchanged. Production of plutonium for defence purposes is kept at the minimum level required to meet defence needs. It would not be in the national interest to give details.

Tobacco

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the sums being expended by the European Economic Community on the growth and export of high-tar tobacco.

The Prime Minister: The Government are concerned at the grave consequences on health of smoking cigarettes and other forms of tobacco both in Europe and in the Third world.

We have long been critical of the Community's CAP tobacco regime. We have consistently argued that support for this crop should be reduced. We were successful in securing the introduction in 1988 of measures to reduce expenditure and discourage the production of the less-marketable and higher-tar varieties, for example through the stabiliser mechanism. Further reductions in support for certain of the less marketable varieties were agreed in this year's price-fixing negotiations.

Our objective is less production, reduced intervention and less subsidised export of the higher-tar varieties. We shall take every opportunity to continue to pursue this policy in future negotiations.

Advisers

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Prime Minister if she will introduce legislation to provide opposition parties with funds for the payment of advisers comparable with those sums spent by the Cabinet Office on advisers who are not career civil servants.

The Prime Minister: No. Opposition parties are already given financial assistance for support in respect of their parliamentary duties.

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Prime Minister what restrictions exist on the spending of public money on prime ministerial advisers who are not career civil servants; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Such costs, like the other costs of my office, are kept under close scrutiny and are restricted to what is necessary.

Workplace Nurseries

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Prime Minister how many whole-time equivalent civil servants are currently employed; and how many whole-time equivalent workplace nursery places are currently provided for children of civil servants.

The Prime Minister: On 1 October 1989, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 565,075 whole-time civil servants. On 20 March this year the Department of Social Security opened a workplace nursery in Hertford which offers 12 whole-time places. Six more nurseries are expected to open later this year.

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister if she will give the number of dedicated energy managers in the Cabinet Office and the number of person years devoted to energy management in the latest year.

The Prime Minister: In most buildings occupied by the Cabinet Office other Departments are the main occupiers and have their own staff responsible for energy management within the building. The Cabinet Office itself has one part-time energy manager.

Mr. Frank Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister if she will give the number of energy audits carried out in the Cabinet Office in the last five years and for each audit a statement of its main conclusions.

The Prime Minister: No energy audits have so far been undertaken, but three are currently under consideration for buildings where the Cabinet Office is the major occupier.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister if he will give for each year from 1978 the energy consumption, broken down by fuel, of the buildings occupied by the Cabinet Office, expressing the figures in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* 1978-79 money terms and *(c)* units of consumption for electricity in kilowatt hours, gas in therms, liquid fuel in litres and solid fuel in tonnes.

The Prime Minister: The figures requested are available only in cash and 1978-79 money terms and only for the following years:

	Electricity £	*Gas* £	*Liquid Fuel* £
1987-88	268,523	74,797	56,511
	[1](130,870)	(36,454)	[1](27,542)
1988-89	294,485	53,904	39,906
	[1](133,982)	(24,525)	(18,156)
1989-90	295,126	56,575	[2]42,000
	[1](125,078)	[1](24,169)	[1](17,942)

[1] Denotes 1978-79 money terms.
[2] Estimate.

Mr. Colin Wallace

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister when she expects to reply to the letter to her, dated 23 April, from Mr. Colin Wallace, on Clockwork Orange.

The Prime Minister: A reply has been sent on my behalf.

Departmental Savings

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Prime Minister what were the value-for-money savings in operations identified by internal audit and internal efficiency arrangements, by external audit and by management consultants retained by her office between 1983-84 and 1988-89; and what was the amount of those savings fulfilled to date.

The Prime Minister: The information for my office is not held separately, but is contained in the overall figure for the office of the Minister for the Civil Service. The identification of value-for-money targets is an integral part of the annual OMCS planning and budgeting exercise even

though those targets have not always been expressed in purely financial terms. Value-for-money improvements including purchasing savings, of £3·015 million have been achieved between 1985-86 and 1988-89, although it is not possible to identify the separate contributions made by each of the means of study mentioned.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Prime Minister what mechanisms exist in *(a)* her office and *(b)* the Cabinet Office for identifying and tracking value-for-money savings in their operations.

The Prime Minister: The search for year-on-year efficiency gains is an integral part of the planning and budgeting system in both my office and the Cabinet Office. The system also allows for regular monitoring of progress towards targets, and their achievements.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Balance of Payments

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is his estimate of the long-term and short-term capital account of the balance of payments deficit;

(2) if he will include in the balance of payments figure either monthly or quarterly the long-term capital account deficit;

(3) if he will make available to hon. Members figures on the long and short-term capital account deficit when they are available to the Treasury; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The available information on the main categories of financial transaction in the capital account of the balance of payments are published regularly each quarter by the Central Statistical Office in the balance of payments press notice and in *Economic Trends*; both publications are available in the Library. It is not particularly meaningful to distinguish between long-term and short-term capital flows.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the relative impact on exchange rates and the balance of payments of *(a)* capital flows and *(b)* trade flows; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: In the absence of measurement error, capital flows and flows on the current account necessarily sum to zero. The effects, if any, of such flows on the exchange rate will depend on present and expected future policies.

Balance of Payments

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the deficit on the basic balance of the balance of payments.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The available information on the United Kingdom balance of payments, covering both the current account and the main categories of financial transactions in the capital account, is published in the Central Statistical Office's quarterly press notice on the balance of payments and in *Economic Trends*, both of which are available in the Library. The concept of a basic balance is not particularly meaningful.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total private sector deficit accumulated since 1979 because of trade imbalance on the balance of payments.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Figures relating to the private sector and public corporations in respect of the balance of invisibles are published in tables A4 (trade in services and investment income) and A7 (transfers) of *Economic Trends*, March 1990 (pages 82 and 87), which is available in the Library. With the exception of defence equipment (mainly imported), most of visible trade (table A2 of the above publication) is undertaken mainly by the private sector and public corporations.

Investment Levels

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the level of manufacturing investment was in the first quarter of the current year.

Mr. McAvoy: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the level of manufacturing investment was in the first quarter of 1990.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The provisional estimate of manufacturing investment in the first quarter of 1990 is £3,091 million, at 1985 prices and seasonally adjusted. This is 1 per cent. higher than the previous quarter and 9 per cent. higher than the first quarter of 1989.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met the Confederation of British Industry; and whether levels of investment were discussed.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor addressed the CBI's annual dinner on 17 May at which a range of subjects were discussed. This speech referred to the record rise in investment over the last three years, which he naturally welcomed. While he recognised the difficulties of the current slowdown in demand and output, he took the opportunity to urge British business to invest wherever it can.

European Monetary System

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he is taking to assess potential effects on British exports to the European Community of full membership of the European monetary system.

Mr. Norman Lamont: We will join the ERM when the Government's conditions have been met. All the potential effects of membership are, of course, kept under review.

Manufacturing Exports

Mr. Amos: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the United Kingdom manufacturing export figures for the last two years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Exports of manufactured goods on a balance of payments basis for the past two years were:

	£ billion
1988	64·9
1989	75·2

Exports of manufactures have continued to grow strongly in 1990: in the first quarter they were 15 per cent. higher by value than in the same quarter a year earlier.

Manufacturers' Output Prices

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the causes of the increase in manufacturers' output prices during 1989 and of the effect of the price rises on the economy.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The increase in manufacturers' output prices reflects exceptional growth of demand over the last two years. Inflation damages the economy by increasing uncertainty, discouraging investment, and reducing profitability. It undermines industrial relations and reduces confidence in the management of the economy, at home and abroad. The Government's tight monetary and fiscal policy will ensure that inflation falls.

Non-North Sea GDP

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of non-North sea money, gross domestic product, non-North sea taxes, national insurance contributions and the poll tax represented in 1989-90; and what is the planned proportion in 1990-91.

Mr. Norman Lamont: It is estimated that non-North sea taxes, national insurance contributions and community charge in 1989-90 amounted to 36¾ per cent. of non-North sea GDP (adjusted to remove the distortion due to the abolition of domestic rates). The Budget forecast for the comparable figure in 1990-91 is 37 per cent.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many staff are employed by his Department; and what proportion of them are employed in each of the standard regions.

Mr. Ryder: The number of industrial and non-industrial staff employed by the Treasury (including the Civil Service Catering Organisation) totalled 3,181 on 1 April 1989. The proportion employed in each standard region is as follows:

	Per cent
South-East	81·8
South-West	3·7
West Midlands	0·4
North-West	1·5
Northern	0·7
Yorkshire and Humberside	0·7
East Midlands	0·3
East Anglia	5·8
Wales	1·9
Scotland	3·0
Northern Ireland	0·0
Elsewhere (abroad)	0·1

Exchange Rate Mechanism

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects the Madrid conditions for exchange rate mechanism participation to be satisfied.

Mr. Ryder: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer gave to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) on 26 April, *Official Report*, column *475*.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent discussions he has had with European Community Governments concerning United Kingdom entry into the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system.

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer regularly discusses a wide range of economic matters with European Community Governments.

Income Tax

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish his estimates of the number of individuals presently paying income tax in *(a)* England and *(b)* Wales.

Mr. Lilley: The estimated number of individuals resident in England and liable to income tax is 20·4 million for 1987-88, the latest available year. The corresponding estimate for Wales is 940,000. Married women are included where their earned income exceeds the wife's earned income allowance and any personal allowances and reliefs unused against the husband's income.

Sir David Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the percentage of the population of the United Kingdom who do not pay any income tax.

Mr. Lilley: In 1990-91 it is estimated that about 45 per cent. of those aged 18 and over in the United Kingdom are not liable to pay income tax. Some may, however, receive interest on deposits in banks and building society accounts on which non-reclaimable composite rate tax has been paid. The estimate is based on a projection of the 1987-88 survey of personal income and is provisional.

Trading and Capital Account Deficit

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how the total trading and capital account deficit which has accumulated since 1979 has been financed.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The available information on the current account (trade in goods and services, investment income and transfers) and on the capital account (transactions in external financial assets and liabilities) of the balance of payments are given in table A1 of *Economic Trends*, March 1990 (page 79), a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total deficit accumulated since 1979 because of capital account deficits on the balance of payments.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The available information on the capital account of the balance of payments (transactions in external financial assets and liabilities) is given in table A8 of *Economic Trends*, March 1990 (page 88), a copy of which is in the Library.

Contract Cleaners

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what have been the average wages of service contract cleaners for each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Ryder: The average rate for those on contract to Government Departments is a matter for the contractor concerned and will depend on a number of factors.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has received the NUCPS report entitled, "Contract Cleaners—the Lowest Paid"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: The NUCPS report "Contract Cleaners—the Lowest Paid" has not yet reached the Treasury.

Taxation (Savings)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list all those taxes which apply to savings with the tax take in each case for the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Lilley: The tax liability in 1990-91 on investment income received by individual savers, including interest received on bank and building society accounts, national savings and dividends received from companies, is estimated at £10·5 billion. Tax reliefs on debt interest, for example mortgage interest relief, are excluded.

Other taxes relevant to savings are capital gains tax, inheritance tax and stamp duty. Forecasts of receipts in 1990-91 for each of these taxes are in table 1·2 of the 1990-91 Financial Statement and Budget Report. Not all these yields are derived from savings.

Mortgage Tax Relief

Mr. Paice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what he estimates would be the cost to the Treasury of providing tax relief for first-time buyers on their mortgages at double the present rate of relief, at current prices.

Mr. Lilley: I regret that information on mortgage interest relief for first-time buyers is not available.

Mr. Walden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the cost to the Treasury of mortgage tax relief for the years 1987, 1988 and 1989.

Mr. Lilley: Estimates for financial years are as follows:

Year	*Value of Mortgage interest relief £ million*
1987-88	4,900
[1]1988-89	5,400
[1]1989-90	6,900

[1] Provisional.

Child Benefit

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many working families with children receive more in child benefit than they pay in income tax, distinguishing between two and one-parent families.

Mr. Major: In 1990-91 an estimated 900,000 families with heads in full or part-time employment will receive more in child benefit than they pay in income tax. Almost half the families have insufficient income to be liable to income tax. A total of 600,000 are two-parent families and 300,000 are single parents. Estimates are based on a projection of the 1987 family expenditure survey and are subject to revision.

EC Contributions

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of the total net contributions to the European Economic Community was borne by the United Kingdom in the most recent annual period for which figures are available; and if he will publish a table showing the net contributions or net receipts in respect of each member state.

Mr. Ryder: The "Statement on the 1990 Community Budget" (Cm. 1059) includes an estimate of £2,175 million for the United Kingdom's net contribution to the European Economic Community in 1990. It is not possible to express this amount as a percentage of total net contributions as the net balances of member states will sum to zero after allowance is made for unallocated expenditure (mainly aid and some administration), miscellaneous revenue and budget surpluses.

Comparable information about the net balances of other member states is not available.

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give for each year from 1978 the energy consumption, broken down by fuel, of the buildings occupied by his Department, expressing the figures in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* 1978-79 money terms and *(c)* units of consumption for electricity in kilowatt hours, gas in therms, liquid fuel in litres and solid fuel in tonnes.

Mr. Richard Ryder: I gave the hon. Member the figures for 1989 in current terms in my answers of 30 April, *Official Report*, column *444*, and 14 May, *Official Report*, column *274*. Figures for previous years are not available.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the number of dedicated energy managers in his Department and the number of person years devoted to energy management in the latest year.

Mr. Ryder: Energy management responsibilities form part of the duties of several officials with the major co-ordinating role being undertaken by a senior executive officer. The total time devoted to these duties is currently estimated to be 0·2 man years per year. This figure is expected to increase.

Tax Evasion

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the amount lost to the Exchequer by tax evasion in each of the main categories of taxation; and what this is expressed as a number of pence on the basic rate of tax.

Mr. Lilley: Reliable estimates of tax lost through evasion are not possible.

Finance Bill

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he intends to publish in draft form the regulations provided for in clause 60 of the Finance Bill (capital movements between residents of member states); and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: The Board of Inland Revenue announced in a press release on 19 April 1990 that it was hoped to

publish the regulations governing the reporting requirement introduced by clause 60 of the Finance Bill (for certain transactions) shortly. I have today authorised the publication of the draft regulations. The Inland Revenue is issuing a press release giving further details.

South Africa

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has made to the International Monetary Fund about the need for further debt reduction for front-line states in South Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. Friend has made no such representations.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to meet representatives of the front-line South African states to discuss debt reduction.

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. Friend has no plans to meet representatives of the front-line South African states.

Manufacturing Investment

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) at 1989 prices, how much higher or lower manufacturing investment would have been in each year since 1978-79 *(a)* had the level of 1978-79 been maintained and *(b)* had the average rate of change from 1974 to 1979 been maintained;

(2) at 1989 prices *(a)* what manufacturing investment would have been had it maintained 1978-79 levels in each subsequent year, *(b)* what manufacturing investment would have been in each year since 1978-79 had it changed at the same rate as in (i) Japan, (ii) the United States of America, (iii) West Germany, (iv) France and (v) OECD average level; and *(c)* what manufacturing investment was in each year since 1978-79.

Mr. Major *[holding answer 21 May 1990]:* A 1989 constant price series for manufacturing investment is not available. The table provides the available information at 1985 prices.

United Kingdom manufacturing investment (including leased assets) £ million 1985 prices

Year	*Actual investment*	*Difference from 1978-79 average*	*1979 investment projected at 1974-79 average rate of change (2·1 per cent.)*	*Difference from actual level*	*1979 investment projected at year on year percentage changes[1] for:*				
	(a)	*(a)—£10,937*	*(b)*	*(a)—(b)*	*Japan*	*France*	*USA*	*West Germany*	*OECD[2]*
1979	11,158	+221	11,158	—	[3]—	11,158	11,158	11,158	[3]—
1980	9,920	−1,017	11,392	−1,472	[3]—	11,950	11,301	11,939	[3]—
1981	7,735	−3,202	11,631	−3,896	[3]—	11,102	10,205	11,383	[3]—
1982	7,603	−3,334	11,875	−4,272	[3]—	10,447	8,368	10,302	[3]—
1983	7,541	−3,396	12,125	−4,584	[3]—	10,165	9,849	10,446	[3]—
1984	8,922	−2,015	12,379	−3,457	[3]—	10,297	11,100	10,300	[3]—
1985	10,264	−673	12,639	−2,375	[3]—	10,966	9,990	11,680	[3]—
1986	9,654	−1,283	12,905	−3,251	[3]—	11,317	10,070	12,789	[3]—
1987	10,142	−795	13,176	−3,034	[3]—	12,087	—	—	[3]—
1988	11,334	+397	13,453	−2,119	[3]—	—	—	—	[3]—
1989	12,043	+1,106	13,735	−1,692	[3]—	—	—	—	[3]—

[1] Source: OECD National Accounts Volume 2 1974-87. The percentage changes are based on figures, at 1980 prices, of gross fixed capital formation by owners engaged in manufacturing. The coverage is therefore not exactly comparable to the United Kingdom figures which differ, in particular, by the inclusion of leased assets.

[2] Figures of gross fixed capital formation in manufacturing are not available for a number of OECD countries. It is not possible to produce average change figures covering the group of countries for which figures are available because all figures are expressed in national currencies.

[3] Not available.

Civil Service

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give figures for 1979-80 and each subsequent year on *(a)* the cost of the civil service and *(b)* the average cost for each civil servant; and if he will break down the average cost for each civil servant into pay, national insurance, superannuation, and other costs such as office space, heating, lighting, car allowance, travel allowance, etc.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 21 May 1990]:* Civil service running costs control was introduced only in 1986-87 and these costs have not been recorded to the level of detail requested. Due to coverage changes, comparable figures prior to 1980-81 are not available, and those for the years prior to 1986-87 have had to be estimated to the nearest £50 million. Table 1 sets out total running costs on current coverage, the number of full-time staff covered and the cost per head for the year indicated.

Table 1

	1980-81	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*
Departmental running costs in £ million[1]	6,800	7,700	8,400	9,650	10,200	10,700	11,352	12,009	12,698	13,680
Average full-time staff included in running costs[2] of which:	712,200	693,900	675,100	654,900	639,300	633,700	634,700	622,500	608,000	602,900
Civil Service	625,600	608,700	590,900	571,400	556,300	550,600	551,600	540,300	527,200	525,700
Armed Forces	58,000	58,000	58,000	58,000	58,000	58,000	58,000	57,000	56,000	53,000
Northern Ireland Civil Service	28,600	27,200	26,200	25,500	25,000	25,100	25,100	25,200	24,800	24,200
Running costs £ per head	9,548	11,097	12,443	14,735	15,955	16,885	17,886	19,292	20,885	22,690

[1] Departmental running costs comprise pay and national insurance costs, personnel overheads (including travel allowances), accommodation costs, office and other services. They do not include notional accruing pensions liability, pensions in payment or capital expenditure.

[2] Figures for average levels of full-time staff in post across the year. They exclude staff in trading funds for example HMSO, and other areas now exempted from gross running cost control (Cm. 1021 Ch. 21.3.16 refers). Although most of the armed forces are also outside running costs, those personnel engaged in headquarters and support activities are included.

Table 2 shows the average man-year cost for the years from 1986-87 when casual staff and overtime are added, and analyses the cost by major components.

Table 2

	1986-87 £	*1987-88* £	*1988-89* £	*1988-89* £
Running costs per man year	15,532	16,851	18,172	19,470
Comprising:				
Pay costs	9,874	10,751	11,633	12,338
Personnel overheads	1,276	1,456	1,516	1,580
Accommodation costs	1,867	1,938	2,181	2,501
Office services (eg telecommunications)	1,222	1,379	1,416	1,584
Other services (eg contract services)	1,293	1,327	1,426	1,467

Public Sector Labour Costs

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the latest figures available for the total annual cost and the average annual cost of full-time equivalent posts in *(a)* the National Health Service, *(b)* the civil service, *(c)* local government and *(d)* all remaining public sector work forces, including nationalised industries; and if he will break down the average cost for a full-time equivalent post into pay, national insurance, superannuation and other costs.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 21 May 1990]:* Figures for the total annual cost and the average annual cost of full-time equivalent posts in the civil service, together with an analysis of average civil service man-year costs is given in another question tabled by my hon. Friend which I am also answering today. Comparable information for the National Health Service, local government and all remaining public sector work forces is not available.

The CSO publication "United Kingdom National Accounts" shows expenditure on income from employment (wages and salaries, including employers' contributions to national insurance and superannuation) for local authorities and public corporations in table 2·5. For the National Health Service this information is shown under "Health" in table 9·4.

Information on the number of employees on a full-time equivalent basis in each sector is given in an article in *Economic Trends*, December 1989 edition.

Any broad averages of per capita remuneration costs derived from these sources must be interpreted with great caution. Cost and employment figures are subject to differences in definition and coverage.

Public Appointments

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the full-time and part-time public appointments for which he is responsible, together with the salary and the date when each appointment is due for renewal.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 23 May 1990]:* Details of appointments made by the Treasury are published annually in "Public Bodies" and "Women into Public Appointments". "Public Bodies" is available in the Library of the House. The latest edition of "Women into Public Appointments" is to be published next month. A copy will be placed in the Library.

Education, Police and Fire Services

Mr. Latham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer to questions from the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet), of 27 April, *Official Report*, columns *355-56*, if he will break down the figures given for the effect on *(a)* income tax and *(b)* value added tax of transferring services from local government to central Government between (i) education, (ii) police and (iii) fire.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 23 May 1990]:* Pursuant to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) of 27 April, the total costs of education, the police and the fire service (including civil defence) in 1990-91 would be around £18 billion, £5 billion and £1 billion respectively, if local authorities spent in line with total standard spending in England and Wales and total current expenditure in Scotland. If this expenditure were transferred to central Government, with no change to revenue support grant and specific grants for the police and fire service eliminated, this would imply additional expenditure of around £18 billion on education, £2·4 billion on police and £1 billion on fire and civil defence. These sums are equivalent to increases of around 12p, 1½p and ½p respectively in the basic rate of income tax or to increases of 9, 1 and ½ percentage points respectively in the VAT rate.

Income

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table giving the percentage increase in *(a)* income from employment, *(b)* income from self-employment, *(c)* rent, dividends and interest, *(d)* social security benefits and *(e)* personal disposable income, between 1978-79 and 1989-90, giving the contribution of each towards personal disposable income.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 24 May 1990]:* Estimates in respect of the first quarter of 1990 will be published in late June. The most up-to-date comparison available, for calendar years 1978 to 1989, gives the following percentage increases and percentages of personal disposable income:

	Percentage change 1989 on 1978	As a percentage of personal[1] disposable income	
		1978	1989
Income from employment	+183	87	82
Income from self-employment	+255	12	14
Rent, dividends and interest	+258	11	13
Social security benefits	+191	14	13
Personal disposable income	+202		

[1] Personal disposable income is total personal income less taxes, social security contributions and certain transfer payments.

ENERGY

Overhead Power Cables

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assessments have been made of the environmental hazards of overhead power cables for those who live directly beneath; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: I understand there has been a very small number of cases over many years of overhead line conductors breaking and falling across houses without causing any injury.

Any electrical conductor, whether forming part of an overhead line, underground cable, or the wiring and appliances in the home creates an electric and magnetic field in its vicinity. Some scientists have claimed that these fields affect human health. Research on this has been going on worldwide for over 10 years and to date has not identified any serious risk.

In the United Kingdom a major research programme is continuing which is being funded and carried out by the National Grid Company, previously part of the CEGB, mostly using independent laboratories.

Nuclear Electric

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list those matters relating to the work of Nuclear Electric on which it is his policy to answer parliamentary questions; and how this differs from his former policy in relation to the work of the Central Electricity Generating Board.

Mr. Wakeham: My policy is unchanged. Questions which relate to the operational management of Nuclear Electric plc remain a matter for the company.

Insulation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his Department's estimate of the saving in electricity demand which would result from insulation to the highest standards being advocated by his Department of *(a)* 33 per cent., *(b)* 50 per cent., *(c)* 66 per cent., *(d)* 75 per cent. and *(e)* 90 per cent. of all homes in England and Wales.

Mr. Wakeham: A recent estimate has indicated that if all cost-effective insulation measures were applied, where relevant, to the housing stock in England and Wales 5·5TWh of electricity, used in space and water heating, could be saved. This represents 2·4 per cent. of the total electricty consumed in England and Wales.

However, householders are likely to opt at least in part for greater warmth rather than simply saving energy.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) when the vitrification plant for the solidification of high-level radioactive waste, presently under construction at British Nuclear Fuels, Sellafield, will be completed and commissioned; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when the store for receipt of the sealed canisters of vitrified high-level radioactive waste at British Nuclear Fuels, Sellafield, will be completed and commissioned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: I understand from British Nuclear Fuels plc that the vitrification plant will be completed during June this year and that commissioning is expected by January 1991. The vitrified product store has already been completed and commissioning is expected by October 1990.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are the neutron and alpha/beta/gamma components of surface radiation dose equivalent rates, in milliSieverts per hour, for vitrified high-level waste containers for both Magnox and light water reactor/advanced gas-cooled reactor oxide fuels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: I understand from British Nuclear Fuels plc that the vitrified waste will be produced and stored in stainless steel welded containers and the process carried out remotely behind concrete shielding. Average dose rates in areas to which the operators have access will be approximately 0·001 milliSieverts per hour.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what are the approximate overall dimensions, capacity and design features of an approved single vitrified high-level radioactive waste capsule or canister.

Mr. Baldry: I understand from British Nuclear Fuels plc that each vitrified high-level radioactive waste container is approximately 134 cm high and 43 cm in diameter and weighs approximately 75 kg. Its volumetric capacity is approximately 170 litres and each canister holds approximately 400 kg of vitrified waste.

These canisters are made from stainless steel and designed for easy lid placement and welding when full, for safe and reliable handling, and for the ability to withstand stresses arising during filling, handling and storage. The safety case for the on-site storage of these canisters has to be agreed by the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate before the plant can be operated.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give an estimate of the anticipated volume of high-level radioactive waste to be returned to customers overseas after reprocessing by British Nuclear Fuels Ltd.; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: I understand from British Nuclear Fuels plc that the latest estimate of high-level radioactive waste to be returned to overseas customers following reprocessing under contracts with return of waste options is 300 cu m.

Energy Consumption

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make it his policy to require all companies contracted to provide goods and services to his Department to conduct a regular energy audit of their operations.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Contractors will continue to be chosen on the basis of competitive tenders, and their efficient use of energy will lead to lower unit costs.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give the number of dedicated energy managers in his Department and the number of person years devoted to energy management in the latest year.

Mr. Wakeham: An energy manager in the Department's headquarters building, together with local energy managers in five other premises in which the Department is an occupant, expects to devote around one third of a man year of effort to energy management.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give the number of energy audits carried out in his Department in the last five years and for each audit a statement of its main conclusions.

Mr. Wakeham: An energy audit was not considered cost-effective in our former headquarters, because the Department had been under notice to quit since before 1985.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give for each year from 1978 the energy consumption, broken down by fuel, of the buildings occupied by his Department, expressing the figures in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* 1978-79 money terms and *(c)* units of consumption for electricity in kilowatt hours, gas in therms, liquid fuel in litres and solid fuel in tonnes.

Mr. Wakeham: I regret that information on energy consumption in buildings occupied by my Department over this period is not available. Under new arrangements for direct billing this information will be available from 1990-91 onwards.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy when his Department last conducted a full energy audit of its own building stock.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Department regularly monitors energy usage in its new headquarters building, of which it is the sole occupier and into which it moved in September last year. The building has an up-to-date electronic building energy management system. The Department is discussing with the Department of the Environment (Property Holdings) the potential for its commissioning energy management contracts aimed at improving overall energy efficiency on the civil estate, including my Department's headquarters building. These would include full energy audits. The Department has appointed energy managers to monitor energy consumption in all the other buildings on the common user estate where it is an occupant.

Coal

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the average difference in percentage ash content between the medium sulphur coals presently being burned in British power stations and the coals of low-sulphur content.

Mr. Wakeham: The ash content of coal, as sold, typically varies up to about 20 per cent. There is no particular association with sulphur content.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the estimated increase in the percentage of fine dust released to the atmosphere as a result of replacing existing coal used with low-sulphur coal by the percentage required to meet European Community standards.

Mr. Wakeham: The Government are committed to achieving the reductions in emissions specified in the EC large combustion plants directive. It is for the electricity industry to plan how it will achieve its share of these reductions.

Dust emissions from power stations are subject to limits set by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. The limits set for existing power stations will continue to apply irrespective of the type of coal used.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment he has made of the environmental implications of the imports of low-sulphur coal, in respect of any consequential need for large storage dumps alongside power stations.

Mr. Wakeham: The Government are committed to achieving the reductions in emissions specified in the EC large combustion plants directive. It is for the electricity industry to plan how it will achieve its share of these reductions.

Any request for extensions to power stations would be subject to the consent procedure set out in section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989.

Oil Spillage, Mersey

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether he will place in the Library a copy of the pipelines inspectorate's interim report on the release of oil into the Mersey from the Shell pipeline.

Mr. Wakeham: The pipeline inspectorate report into the failure of the Mersey oil pipeline on 19 August 1989 is being prepared under the instruction of the Health and Safety Commission. Subject to the agreement of the commission, I intend to publish the report.

Collieries

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will discuss with the chairman of British Coal the scope for re-opening pits capable of producing low-sulphur coal which have been closed since 1984.

Mr. Baldry: Decisions on the operation of individual collieries in relation to market demand are a management matter for British Coal.

National Grid Company

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is his Department's latest estimate of the value of the grid company.

Mr. Wakeham: The value of the National Grid Company in the flotation of the 12 regional electricity companies will depend on a wide range of factors, including its profitability, capital structure and future prospects and market conditions at the time of the sale.

Departmental Savings

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what mechanisms exist in his Department for indentifying and tracking value-for-money savings in its operations.

Mr. Wakeham: The mechanisms are:

Annual plans and reports prepared by heads of division on their objectives, activities, use of resources and intended value for money improvements over the next public expenditure survey period;

A management plan for efficiency gains in administrative expenditure covering the same period;

An administrative budgeting scheme under which budgets for the financial year ahead for staff and associated costs are delegated to senior line managers;

Annual targets for and savings made in purchasing and stockholdings; and

Annual programmes of work to be carried out by the Department's internal consultancy, inspection and review services.

All these mechanisms are subject to approval by and carried through under the general direction of the Permanent Under-Secretary and his immediate colleagues.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what were the value-for-money savings in his Department's operations identified by internal audit and internal efficiency arrangements and by external audit and by management consultants retained by his Department between 1983-84 and 1988-89; and what is the amount of those savings fulfilled to date.

Mr. Wakeham: Over the period 1985-86 to 1988-89, my Department secured value-for-money savings in its operations totalling some £9·4 million. Savings in office space, from keen purchasing of goods and services, from staff inspections and from other internal efficiency measures all contributed to the total.

The value of savings secured in 1983-84 and 1984-85 is not readily available. The systems now in place to target as well as deliver these savings were introduced at various times over the period, so no useful comparison with savings identified by these systems can be given.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Pop Concert, Brighton

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on how many people were injured at the recent New Kids on the Block concerts on 28 April at Whitley Bay and 29 April at the Brighton centre; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I understand from the police that, in addition to those people who received minimal first aid treatment at the events themselves, three people were referred to hospital during the concert which took place at Whitley Bay ice rink on 27 April with what could be termed injuries and another four during a second concert at the same venue on 28 April. Fifteen people were referred to hospital during the concert at Brighton on 29 April, but this was a precautionary measure on a very hot day and none had any appearance of injuries. All were discharged later that night. Responsibility for the licensing of public musical events of this kind, including the stipulation of appropriate measures to ensure crowd safety, is a matter for local authorities in conjunction with the police and the fire authority. The Health and Safety Executive is currently working on new guidance on safety at pop concerts.

Prison Disturbances

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for the current year to date, and by location, the number of prison disturbances, showing in his answer *(a)* how long the disturbance lasted, *(b)* how many inmates were involved, *(c)* how many inmates received injuries and *(d)* how many prison staff received injuries.

Mr. Mellor: The most serious incidents, involving a substantial number of inmates acting in concert and the use of violence towards staff or property, occurred at the following establishments:

Duration	[1] *Number of inmates injured*	[2] *Number of staff injured*
HMP Blundeston		
Commenced at 1920 on 11 January, ended at 0620 on 12 January	—	—
HMP Manchester		
1100 on 1 April—1820 on 25 April	75	197
HMP Long Lartin		
2100 on 2 April—1100 on 3 April	1	6
HMYOI Glen Parva		
1930 on 6 April—0304 on 7 April	—	5
HMP Dartmoor		
1445 on 7 April—1645 on 8 April (although 1 prisoner remained on roof until mid-day on 14 April)	9	—
HMP Cardiff		
0830-1210 on 8 April	1	5
HMP Bristol		
1529 on 8 April—1430 on 9 April	12	25
HMYOI Stoke Heath		
2025 on 8 April—1315 on 9 April	—	3
HMRC Pucklechurch		
1835 on 22 April—1340 on 23 April	35	41
HMP Winchester		
2130 on 11 May—0932 on 12 May	—	—

Other incidents involving groups of inmates acting in concert and using a significant amount of violence towards staff or property occurred at the following establishments:

Duration	[1] *Number of inmates injured*	[2] *Number of staff injured*
HMP Dartmoor		
1035 on 13 January—1135 on same day	1	1

Duration	[1]Number of inmates injured	[2]Number of staff injured
HMP Kirkham		
2025 on 1 April—2045 on same day	—	—
HMP Brixton		
1136 on 8 April—1220 on same day	—	4
HMP Hull		
1505 on 8 April—1610 on same day	—	1
HMP The Verne		
0220 on 8 April—0207 on 9 April	—	—
HMYOI Everthorpe		
1945 on 9 April—2245 on same day	4	5
HMYOI Portland		
1945 on 12 April—2040 on same day	—	—

It is impossible to be precise about the number of prisoners who were present in the particular parts of the establishments where incidents took place who were active participants. As regards the incidents at Blundeston and Winchester, 25 inmates and seven inmates respectively were positively identified as being actively involved.

[1] The figures for inmate injuries do not include the prisoner who died during the incident at Manchester nor the prisoner who was found dead after a fire in his cell at Dartmoor.

[2] In addition, one officer died at the time of the incident at Manchester.

Crack (Seizures)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of seizures of crack in Britain for each month of 1990, stating the street value and the places where the seizures took place.

Mr. Mellor: Forensic science service figures for the number and weight of seizures of crack in 1990, by police region and month of analysis, are set out in the table. The estimated street value of crack varies according to time and place and is not routinely assessed for each seizure. The estimated current street value of the total amount seized in 1990 to date (258·79 grammes) is in the region of £32,500.

There have been no known seizures of crack by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise in 1990 so far. Crack is not generally imported but produced in the United Kingdom from cocaine.

Number of seizures and weight in grams of "crack" in 1990 to date by Police region in which seized and month of analysis

Police region	January		February		March		April		[1]May	
	Seizures	Grams	Seizures	Grams	Seizures	Grams	Seizures	Grams	Seizures	Grams
1. Greater Manchester, Merseyside, Lancashire, North Wales	—	—	1	1·80	6	10·95	5	14·29	2	4·75
2. North East	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
3. Nottinghamshire, South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire	1	0·05	2	2·50	—	—	1	7·88	1	0·10
4. West Midlands	3	3·35	1	0·13	—	—	4	51·21	2	3·12
5. Essex	—	—	—	—	1	0·18	1	Trace	—	—
6. Surrey	—	—	—	—	1	0·09	—	—	—	—
7. Avon and Somerset, Dorset	1	8·00	—	—	3	2·09	—	—	1	5·04
8. South Wales	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
9. Metropolitan Police	5	20·12	8	102·30	16	9·43	17	3·92	14	7·49
10. Scotland	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	10	31·52	12	106·73	27	22·74	28	77·30	20	20·50

[1] Provisional figures to 29 May 1990.

Broadcasting Bill

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received concerning the Broadcasting Bill and religion; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We have received representations from a number of groups and individuals about religious broadcasting. The Broadcasting Bill as introduced would liberalise the regulation of religious broadcasting in a number of ways: for instance, the automatic ban on religious advertising in schedule 2 to the Broadcasting Act 1981 would be lifted. The Bill has subsequently been amended to require Channel 3 and 5 licensees to give a sufficient amount of time to religious programming, and to enable the ITC to allow religious groups to own cable and non-DBS satellite channels where satisfied that this would be appropriate. Content safeguards are needed against possible abuse of religious broadcasting, but, as indicated during the Commons Report stage on 8 May 1990, *Official Report*, column 158, we are reviewing the relevant requirements in the Bill with a view to ensuring that they are both adequate and not unnecessarily restrictive.

Prisons (Mother and Baby Units)

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many places there are in each of the three prison mother and baby units.

Mr. Mellor: The three prison mother and baby units provide accommodation for a total of 39 mothers with their babies. Her Majesty's prison Holloway and Her Majesty's prison and young offender institution Styal each has 12 places and Her Majesty's prison Askham Grange has 15 places.

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many babies were in each of the three prison mother and baby units on the most recent available date; and what were their ages.

Mr. Mellor: On 23 May 1990 there were a total of 30 babies in the three prison mother and baby units. The number and ages of the babies in each unit is as follows:

	Holloway	*Styal*	*Askham Grange*
Aged under one month	1	1	1
Aged 1-2 months	—	2	1
Aged 2-3 months	—	1	—
Aged 3-4 months	1	3	1
Aged 4-5 months	1	—	—
Aged 6-7 months	1	—	2
Aged 7-8 months	2	—	4
Aged 9-10 months	1	1	1
Aged 11-12 months	—	—	2
Aged 12-13 months	—	—	1
Aged 13-14 months	—	—	2
Total number of babies in each unit	7	8	15

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give a breakdown of the offences committed by women who spent time in prison mother and baby units during 1989.

Mr. Mellor: During 1989, a total of 101 women served all or part of their sentence with their babies in the prison mother and baby units. Of these, 34 had been convicted of offences of theft or fraud; 33 had been convicted of drugs offences; 12 had been convicted of offences of violence against the person; eight had been convicted of burglary offences; eight had been convicted of robbery offences; six had been convicted of other indictable offences.

Where a woman had been received on sentence for several offences, only the principal criminal offence has been stated.

Cats

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has received any recent representations on the theft of pet cats, for use in fur coats, animal experimentation and pit-bull baiting.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have received several recent representations on the alleged theft of pet cats. The representations have expressed general concern about the fate of the pets concerned, in particular their use in the fur trade.

Young Offenders Institution Lichfield (Incident)

Mrs. Heal: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the West Midlands as to what police resources in the form of officers, cars and dogs were involved in the search on 14 May when two inmates absconded from Her Majesty's young offenders institution, Lichfield; what was the cost of the operation; from what budget this will be paid; and if he will make a statement;

(2) for what purpose a helicopter was deployed following the incident at Her Majesty's young offenders institution, Lichfield, on 14 May; and what was the cost incurred.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: These are operational matters for the chief constable. I understand from him that no additional costs were incurred.

Multi-agency Panels

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many multi-agency panels are now operating, including magistrates and probation officers.

Mr. John Patten: A number of probation areas indicated their intention to establish such panels in response to the 1988 paper "Tackling Offending: an Action Plan". In some cases these panels have built on existing arrangements for discussions between the chief officers of the various agencies in each area. We do not yet know how many panels are operating nationally.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many multi-agency panels, including members of magistrates' benches and probation officers, are now operating in the Merseyside area; and in which areas these are.

Mr. John Patten: I understand that three multi-agency panels following the recommendations of the 1988 paper "Tackling Offending: an Action Plan", are operating in the Merseyside area, in the petty sessional divisions of St. Helens, Knowsley and Sefton. They include representatives from the probation, social and education services, the police and the voluntary sector, but no magistrates.

Probation (Drug Users)

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of young people under 21 years on probation are known to be hard drug users.

Mr. John Patten: This information is not recorded centrally.

Extradition

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when Her Majesty's Government expect to ratify the European convention on extradition; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: The Government hope to make the necessary Order in Council shortly before the summer recess, with a view to ratification of the convention as soon as possible thereafter. The convention provides for 90 days to elapse between ratification and the provisions coming into effect.

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many persons were extradited to the United Kingdom from each country of the European Community in each of the last five years; and what were their nationalities;

(2) how many persons were extradited from the United Kingdom to each of the other countries of the European Community in each of the last five years; and what were their nationalities.

Mr. Waddington: The tables give the number of persons extradited to and from the United Kingdom in respect of the other countries of the European Community. The United Kingdom does not distinguish between extradition requests in respect of its own nationals and nationals of other countries. For this reason, the nationalities of those whose return is sought is not centrally recorded.

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Extradition to an EC country from the United Kingdom					
Belgium	1	—	[1]26	—	1
Denmark	1	—	—	—	—
France	1	4	—	—	—
Federal Republic of Germany	5	7	2	3	5
Greece	—	—	—	1	—
Republic of Ireland[3]	15	9	13	17	[2]—
Italy	3	4	1	—	1
Luxembourg	—	—	—	—	—
Netherlands	1	3	1	1	2
Portugal	—	—	—	—	—
Spain	—	—	—	—	—
	12	18	[1]30	5	9
Extradition from an EC country to the United Kingdom					
Belgium	1	2	—	—	—
Denmark	—	—	—	—	—
France	—	1	1	3	2
Federal Republic of Germany	2	1	—	—	—
Greece	—	—	—	—	—
Republic of Ireland[3]	17	2	3	6	[2]—
Italy	—	—	—	—	—
Luxembourg	—	—	—	—	—
Netherlands	1	—	5	—	—
Portugal	—	—	1	—	—
Spain	—	—	1	4	2
Total	4	4	8	7	4

[1] Includes 25 Heysel stadium football supporters.
[2] Not yet available.
[3] The return of fugitives to and from the Republic of Ireland takes place under reciprocal backing of warrants legislation, rather than under an extradition treaty.

Mr. Gale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which European Community countries do not permit the extradition of their own nationals.

Mr. Waddington: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State to a question from the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) on 18 April 1990 at columns *910-11*. The limitations on the ability of particular Community countries to extradite their own nationals, described in that reply, apply irrespective of the nature of the offence.

In the third paragraph of the earlier reply, mention is made of an amendment to Dutch domestic law that took place in "1981". This should have read "1988".

Electoral Registers

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the last representations he received from the Data Protection Registrar concerning the sale of electoral registers for other than electoral purposes; and what was his response.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Data Protection Registrar wrote to me in February about the different provisions governing the supply of the electoral and community charges registers. In reply I reaffirmed the Government's policy on the sale of the electoral register and explained that, since the two registers are different in purpose, different considerations apply to their availability. The registrar has since proposed that electoral registration officers should publish lists of the names and addresses of those to whom copies of the electoral register have been supplied; we are considering the proposal.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information the Data Protection Registrar holds about computer interlinks between community charge registers and electoral registers.

Mr. Mellor: I understand that the Registrar holds no such information. He will investigate any evidence of a breach of the Data Protection Act 1984, which he has the responsibility of enforcing.

Belmarsh Prison, Woolwich

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff employed at Belmarsh prison, Woolwich will be housed within the development and how many transferred from other areas will be seeking accommodation in the vicinity.

Mr. Mellor: No quarters will be provided for prison officer grades at this establishment. It is too early to say how many of our staff will look for accommodation in the area.

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he now expects Belmarsh prison, Woolwich, to be operational.

Mr. Mellor: It is hoped that HMP Belmarsh will be ready to admit prisoners in April 1991.

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what approaches have been made to housing authorities in the area to provide accommodation for staff to be employed at Belmarsh prison, Woolwich.

Mr. Mellor: Home Office officials have contacted a number of housing authorities in the area and discussions are continuing. This is just one of a number of options that are currently being pursued with the aim of assisting staff moving into the Belmarsh area.

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff will be employed at Belmarsh prison, Woolwich, when it is fully operational; in what grades; and how many of these will be locally recruited.

Mr. Mellor: The number of staff who will be employed at Her Majesty's prison Belmarsh is still under consideration. It is too early to say how many of these staff will be locally recruited.

Birmingham Pub Bombings

Mr. Batle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will reconsider the remaining scientific evidence in the Birmingham pub bombings case, in the light of the statements to the May inquiry that forensic evidence in the Maguire case can no longer be considered reliable.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. and learned Friend has said on many occasions that he will consider any new evidence which appears to call into question the safety of the convictions of the Birmingham Six. He will of course take into account any evidence presented to the May inquiry which may be relevant to these convictions.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he proposes to take to ensure that material in police or other official archives relating to the Birmingham pub bombings case will not be destroyed.

Mr. John Patten: I understand that the West Midlands police and the Devon and Cornwall constabulary have made arrangements to ensure that all material in their possession relating to the Birmingham pub bombings case is stored in secure conditions pending the outcome of further inquiries into the safety of the convictions of the Birmingham Six. Relevant papers in the possession of the Home Office will also be preserved.

Prisoners (Cell Confinement)

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he hopes to be able to reduce the number of hours each day during which prisoners are confined to their cells.

Mr. Mellor: The improvement of the regime for prisoners, which includes reduction of the hours spent locked in cells, is a continuing objective of the Prisons Board. Last year the average time prisoners spent on regime activities increased by three hours per week.

South African Passport Holders

Mr. Cabom: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department under what circumstances holders of South African passports are eligible to vote in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Holders of South African passports resident in the United Kingdom who are not otherwise disqualified can register as electors and vote at parliamentary, European parliamentary and local government elections only if they also hold British citizenship, the citizenship of another Commonwealth country or of the Republic of Ireland. Holders of South African passports living outside the United Kingdom can register as overseas electors and vote at parliamentary and European parliamentary elections here only if they are British citizens, and fulfil the other criteria for registration.

Criminals (Royalties Payment)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to prevent the payment of royalties to criminals for artistic products arising from their criminal activities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given on 9 May at column *143* to his question about the payment of money to people convicted of murder by those making films about their crimes.

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the number of energy audits carried out in his Department in the last five years and for each audit a statement of its main conclusions.

Mr. Waddington: Sixteen energy audits were carried out in the Home Office in the last five financial years. The main conclusions for each audit were as follows:

Establishment and Main conclusions

Abell House
- Automatic lighting control.
- Switching off all non essential equipment.
- Switching off of Boiler Plant.
- Reduction of heating levels.

Cleland House
- Automatic lighting control.
- Improved heating control.
- Reduction of heating levels.

Branston Store
- Installation of fast operating loading doors.
- Removal of all non perishable goods to one building.
- Insulation to roofs.
- Occupancy sensors.
- Improve heating controls.

Steventon Store
- Prevent ingress of cold and damp into plant rooms.
- High Speed doors to well used warehouses.
- Lighting controls in warehouses.
- Replace tungsten lamps with latest fluorescent fittings.

Lunar House
- Better thermostatic control.
- Improve insulation on flow and return pipes.
- Reduce air infiltration to main entrance by improving door mechanisms.
- Door draught stripping.

Fire Service College
- Provide alternative fuel for planned replacement of boiler plant.
- Supply a swimming pool cover.
- Replace electric heating in one building.
- Insulate walls of selected buildings.
- Modify heating controls in study blocks.

Queen Anne's Gate
- Replace tungsten bulbs with compact fluorescent fittings.
- Install automatic lighting controls where appropriate.
- Extend use of Building Management System.
- Modify air handling to several areas.

Horseferry House
- Re-set thermostatic radiator valves.
- Install automatic lighting controls where appropriate.
- Install more efficient luminaires.
- Install more efficient fluorescent lamps.
- Draught proof windows.
- Install power factor correction equipment.
- Improve housekeeping.
- Changing from a rated water supply to a metered water supply would save approximately £39,000 pa.

Her Majesty's Prison, Send
- Energy consumption is reasonable given the current site conditions.
- Many roofs are currently unlagged, improvement will not be cost effective on energy savings alone.
- Consideration was given to combined heat and power plant but site is not considered suitable.
- A building management system will not be a cost effective measure.

Her Majesty's Prison, The Verne
- Install cavity wall and roof insulation.
- Fit compensator controls where appropriate.
- The establishment has already modified the external lighting as far as possible to make energy savings.
- All tungsten luminaires should be changed to high frequency control gear type.
- Fluorescent luminaires should be changed to high frequency control gear type.

Her Majesty's Prison, Brixton
- Install an energy management system.
- Fit Krypton tubes in existing fluorescent fittings.
- Delegate officers to switch off unwanted lights in areas under their control.
- Fit Krypton tubes to fluorescent fittings.

Her Majesty's Prison, Cookham Wood
- The buildings are insulated to an acceptable standard and additional insulation would not be cost effective. Energy consumption is reasonable and high energy savings cannot be expected.
- Minor modifications to the heating system should be made.
- A building management system would not be cost effective.
- It may be possible to reduce the installed lighting load by using energy efficient Krypton tubes.
- An officer in each area should be delegated to control lighting.

Her Majesty's Prison, Coldingley
- The fuel should be changed from heavy fuel oil to dual fuel, gas/light oil.
- LPHW boilers should be installed in the main accommodation block, works complex, administration block and industrial workshops.
- Replace the steam boilers in the boiler house with steam generators.
- Sequence the operation of the laundry machinery.
- Install a building management system.
- Provide power factor correction equipment.

Her Majesty's Prison, Long Lartin
- Install heat recovery equipment in the laundry.
- Fit SON luminaires in workshops etc. and consider their use for external security lighting.
- Install a building management system.
- Consider the decentralisation of the heating system.

Her Majesty's Prison, Leyhill
- Install heat recovery equipment in the laundry.
- Use high efficiency luminaires for external lighting.
- Install a building management system.
- Consider the installation of a water treatment plant.

Her Majesty's Prison, Cardiff
- Install heat recovery equipment in the laundry.
- Fit SON luminaires in workshops etc.
- Install a building management system.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the number of dedicated energy managers in his Department and the number of person years devoted to energy management in the latest year.

Mr. Waddington: There are four dedicated energy managers in the Home Office. In 1989-90 a total of 5·33 person years were devoted to energy management.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give for each year from 1978 the energy consumption, broken down by fuel, of the buildings occupied by his Department, expressing the figures in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* 1978-79 money terms and *(c)* units of consumption for electricity in kilowatt hours, gas in therms, liquid fuel in litres and solid fuel in tonnes.

Mr. Waddington: No information is available on energy consumption in prison service establishments for financial years prior to 1982-83 and for other Home Office buildings for financial years prior to 1985-86. For later years, the information requested is not available in the format requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Police Authorities (Finance)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will show for each police authority for 1990-91 the level of bids received for capital resources, the amount of supplementary credit approvals issued and the amount of capital grants approved.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is as follows:

£ millions

Police Authority	*Capital Bids*	*Capital Grant Approved*	*Supplementary Credit Approvals*
Avon and Somerset	9·405	3·953	2·645
Bedfordshire	0·709	0·143	0·053
Cambridgeshire	2·048	0·338	0·007
Cheshire	2·514	0·656	0·384
City of London	1·086	0·322	0·062
Cleveland	2·763	0·460	0·095
Cumbria	2·735	0·579	0·247
Derbyshire	1·962	0·402	0·149
Devon and Cornwall	4·267	1·087	0·421
Dorset	2·951	0·606	0·435
Durham	2·596	0·328	0·113
Dyfed-Powys	1·395	0·298	0·076
Essex	5·259	1·100	0·225
Gloucestershire	3·941	0·701	0·148
Greater Manchester	17·377	2·754	0·186
Gwent	3·772	1·602	1·308
Hampshire	5·525	1·039	0·277
Hertfordshire	2·611	0·809	0·503
Humberside	4·070	0·799	0·211
Kent	3·922	0·654	Nil
Lancashire	6·529	1·431	0·623
Leicestershire	7·510	2·847	1·906
Lincolnshire	2·655	0·707	0·109
Merseyside	6·324	1·194	0·336
Norfolk	0·831	0·150	0·048
Northamptonshire	1·972	0·435	0·138
Northumbria	12·719	3·505	2·175
North Wales	2·423	0·406	0·158
North Yorkshire	2·470	0·446	Nil
Nottinghamshire	5·083	1·261	0·747
South Wales	3·265	0·627	0·340
South Yorkshire	8·320	1·939	0·902
Staffordshire	3·906	1·502	1·237
Suffolk	2·322	0·381	0·057
Surrey	5·331	1·621	0·283
Sussex	5·567	1·968	1·289
Thames Valley	10·694	3·096	1·376
Warwickshire	1·309	0·307	0·019
West Mercia	12·716	3·747	2·262
West Midlands	18·493	4·940	2·641
West Yorkshire	17·429	4·020	1·722
Wiltshire	2·512	0·572	0·192
Total	221·288	55·730	26·106

Departmental Savings

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what mechanisms exist in his Department for identifying and tracking value-for-money savings in its operations.

Mr. Waddington: Seeking and achieving such savings are an integral and established part of planning and the annual setting of budgets in the Home Office. I regard the pursuit of value for money as crucial to all Home Office spending.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the value-for-money savings in his

Department's operations identified by internal audit and internal efficiency arrangements and by external audit and by management consultants retained by his Department between 1983-84 and 1988-89; and what is the amount of those savings fulfilled to date.

Mr. Waddington: The improvements resulting from inquiries and studies of this kind are taken into account in the setting of annual budgets and internal targets. More specific information about contributions to value for money is not collected centrally within the Department and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Extradition

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list (1) those countries within the European Community which will extradite their nationals to the United Kingdom when charged with fraud-related offences committed here and (2) those countries within the European Community to which the United Kingdom would extradite British nationals resident here to face charges of fraud committed in those countries.

Mr. John Patten *[pursuant to his reply, 18 April 1990, c. 910-11]:* I regret that in the third paragraph of my reply reference was made to an amendment to Dutch domestic law that took place in "1981". This should have read "1988".

DEFENCE

Warheads (Plutonium Recycling)

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government on the recycling of plutonium from warheads being decommissioned for subsequent use in other nuclear weapons; and if it is the Government's intention to reuse the plutonium from decommissioned Polaris A3-TK warheads in the Trident D-5 programme.

Mr. Alan Clark: It is the policy of Her Majesty's Government to recover all reusable materials, including special nuclear materials, from nuclear warheads which have been returned from service. It would not be in the national interest to give details on the sources and application of fissile materials used in specific defence nuclear programmes.

Trident

Mr. Sean Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what proportion of the cost of the re-entry vehicles for the Trident programme will be incurred in the United States;

(2) what proportion of the cost of the warheads for the Trident programme will be incurred in the United States.

Mr. Alan Clark: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) on 17 January 1990, *Official Report*, column *298*.

Army Personnel (Skills)

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what was the percentage of Army personnel who had *(a)* mechanical engineering skills, *(b)* electrical engineering skills, *(c)* civil engineering skills, *(d)* mechanical transport skills and *(e)* communications skills in each year since 1985;

(2) what is the current percentage of Army personnel who have *(a)* mechanical engineering skills, *(b)* electrical engineering skills, *(c)* civil engineering skills, *(d)* mechanical transport skills and *(e)* communications skills;

(3) for each financial year since 1985-86 how many of those Army personnel who left the service prematurely had *(a)* mechanical engineering skills, *(b)* electrical engineering skills, *(c)* civil engineering skills, *(d)* mechanical transport skills and *(e)* communication skills.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The following information is based upon personnel numbers in the relevant corps. The Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME) employ personnel with both mechanical and electrical engineering skills. The Royal Engineers (RE) employ personnel with civil engineering skills; the Royal Corps of Transport (RCT) employ personnel with mechanical transport skills; and the Royal Signals (R Sigs) employ personnel with communications skills.

(a) Strength as at 31 March 1990, of REME, RE, RCT and R Sigs as a percentage of whole Army[1]

REME	*RE*	*RCT*	*R Sigs*
10·4	9·9	6·9	8·3

(b) Strength of REME, RE, RCT and R Sigs as a percentage of whole Army 1985-86 to 1989-90

	REME	*RE*	*RCT*	*R Sigs*
1985-86	10·0	9·7	7·3	8·8
1986-87	10·0	9·8	7·2	8·9
1987-88	10·2	9·8	6·9	8·8
1988-89	10·3	9·8	6·8	8·5
1989-90	10·4	9·8	6·9	8·3

(c) Premature voluntary release exits of trained male Army and of REME, RE, RCT and R Sigs: 1985-86 to 1989-90

	Whole Army	*REME*	*RE*	*RCT*	*R Sigs*
1985-86	3,587	320	408	259	259
1986-87	3,224	335	319	230	235
1987-88	3,905	332	409	371	317
1988-89	4,545	379	505	369	473
1989-90	4,773	495	557	429	348

[1] Figures relate to trained male strength.

Recruitment

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many men and women were recruited into the Army, the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force in the financial year 1989-90; and how many left each of the services prematurely.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The total intake to the United Kingdom regular forces in the financial year 1989-90 is shown in table 1. The total number of exits from the services under premature wastage outflow categories during the same period is shown in table 2. The categories

included in the outflow numbers correspond with those listed in table 4.18 of Volume 2 of the "Statement on Defence Estimates" with the exception of "Time and age expiries or exercise of rights at option point" and, for service women only, "By exercise of right to give 18 months notice".

Table 1: Intake to United Kingdom Regular Forces from civilian life: 1989-90

Number

	Total	*Males*			*Females*		
		Total	*Officers*	*Servicemen*	*Total*	*Officers*	*Servicewomen*
All Services	36,412	32,337	2,599	29,738	4,075	376	3,699
Royal Navy	5,556	4,696	516	4,180	860	42	818
Royal Marines	1,063	1,063	45	1,018	—	—	—
Army	22,084	20,398	1,377	19,021	1,686	177	1,509
Royal Air Force	7,709	6,180	661	5,519	1,529	157	1,372

Table 2: Premature outflow from United Kingdom Regular Forces: 1989-90

Number

	Total	*Males*			*Females*		
		Total	*Officers*	*Servicemen*	*Total*	*Officers*	*Servicewomen*
All Services	27,184	25,006	2,460	22,546	2,178	184	1,994
Royal Navy	5,153	4,766	659	4,107	387	21	366
Royal Marines	851	851	65	786	—	—	—
Army	15,770	14,896	1,835	13,061	874	71	803
Royal Air Force	6,192	5,275	683	4,592	917	92	825

Accommodation Charges

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the average level of that element of the accommodation charge that was set in lieu of rates in Scotland in the year prior to the introduction of the community charge.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The charges were £359 per married quarter and £101 per unit of single accommodation.

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the average level of that element of the accommodation charge that was set in lieu of rates in England and Wales in the year prior to the introduction of the community charge.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The charges were £408 per married quarter and £115 per unit of single accommodation.

Pilots

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many pilots expressed as a percentage of the total number in the Royal Air Force left at their 38/16-year option date, during the years 1986, 1987, 1988 and 1989; and what percentage retired prematurely and voluntarily prior to this option during the above mentioned years, having completed their flying training and either having reached their squadrons or been accepted for training as instructors.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The proportion of Royal Air Force pilots, expressed as a percentage of the total pilot trained strength at 1 January each year, who left at their 38/16-year optional exit point was as follows:

	Percentage
1986	1·0
1987	0·8
1988	1·2
1989	1·3

The proportion of pilots aged 38 and under who left on premature voluntary release during the same four years was:

	Percentage
1986	0·4
1987	0·4
1988	1·2
1989	0·9

Low Flying

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide details of the accident involving an F15 aircraft during the recent low flying exercise Elder Forest.

Mr. Neubert: A United States Air Force F25 aircraft, participating in the United Kingdom defence exercise, Elder Forest, crashed into the sea approximately 20 miles east of Grimsby on 25 April 1990. The pilot ejected successfully. A United States Air Force accident investigation has been convened in the normal way. It would be premature to speculate about the possible causes of the accident.

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give for each year from 1978 the energy consumption, broken down by fuel, of the buildings occupied by his Department, expressing the figures in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* 1978-79 money terms and *(c)* units of consumption for electricity in kilowatt hours, gas in therms, liquid fuel in litres and solid fuel in tonnes.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information is not held in the form requested. However, section 2 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates" for the years 1980-81 onwards gives details of energy consumption, on the defence estate, in terms of petajoules or volumes of oil. Figures for expenditure on consumption of non-operational fuel are available for the years 1985-86 onwards only, and are as follows:

£ thousands

	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88
Electricity	130,974	141,196	137,713
Gas	43,681	46,885	41,321
Solid Fuel	10,350	11,614	10,618
Liquid Fuel	97,668	49,340	42,994

For details of the expenditure on fuel consumption for the financial year 1988-89, I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him on 10 May 1990, *Official Report*, column *213*.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the number of dedicated energy managers in his Department and the number of person years devoted to energy management in the latest year.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are 15 full-time energy managers in the Ministry of Defence with a much larger number employed as energy wardens at units and establishments on a part-time basis. As the proportion of energy wardens' time devoted to energy management in the last year is not recorded, I am unable to give the total number of person years devoted to energy management.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the number of energy audits carried out in his Department in the last five years and for each audit a statement of its main conclusions.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence has carried out 295 energy audits over the last five years. It is not practicable to summarise the findings of this number of audits; however, the potential for a savings on energy consumption of 15 to 20 per cent. has been identified in most cases.

Departmental Savings

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the value-for-money savings in his Department's operations identified by internal audit and internal efficiency arrangements, and by external audit and by management consultants retained by his Department between 1983-84 and 1988-89; and what is the amount of those savings fulfilled to date.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The improvements resulting from inquiries and studies of the kind mentioned are taken into account in the setting of annual budgets and internal targets. The results are not collated centrally within the Department.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what mechanisms exist in his Department for identifying and tracking value-for-money savings in its operations.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Department maintains a general efficiency programme, as well as other mechanisms for ensuring that its activities are conducted in an economic, efficient and effective manner. Each of the systems has appropriate monitoring and follow-up procedures. These are not designed to identify value-for-money savings separately from other improvements, not all of which are quantifiable.

Radiation

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what special means there is of shielding, blocking or attenuating the neutron emission from the Chevaline warhead during storage; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what special means there are of shielding, blocking or attenuating the neutron emission from the Chevaline warhead during transportation to and from the royal naval armaments depot at Coulport to and from the Royal Ordnance factory at Burghfield; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert *[holding answer 24 May 1990]:* No special measures beyond the laid down working procedures and MOD's normal radiological protection practices are necessary.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which component of the Chevaline warhead assembly gives rise to the neutron emission radiation dose equivalent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert *[holding answer 24 May 1990]:* The fissile material within the warhead assembly.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the average recorded or assessed neutron radiation dose equivalent exposure received by members of the general public due to the road transportation of the Chevaline warhead on any one journey or throughout any transit period; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert *[holding answer 24 May 1990]:* Attributable doses to members of the public from warheads involved in transport operations are zero.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the average recorded or assessed neutron radiation dose equivalent exposure received by road transportation personnel during carriage of the Chevaline warhead on any one journey or throughout any transit period; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert *[holding answer 24 May 1990]:* Attributable doses to transportation personnel from the Chevaline warhead during carriage on any one journey or throughout any transit period are zero.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if any neutron emission radiation dose equivalent exposure has been recorded for personnel at *(a)* Royal Ordnance factory, Llanishen, *(b)* atomic weapons establishment, Aldermaston, *(c)* Royal Ordnance factory, Burghfield, and *(d)* the facility at Donnington; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neubert *[holding answer 24 May 1990]:* There are low levels of neutron exposure to some workers in the atomic weapons establishment stations at Aldermaston and Burghfield, but not at the other locations. These are determined and recorded and the consequential effective (whole body) dose equivalents are such that the total doses sustained by the individuals from radiations arising from their work activities are within the relevant MOD and United Kingdom limits and are as low as reasonably practicable.

Radiation

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) on 2 May, *Official Report*, column *594*, concerning records of individual radiation dose records, whether he will publish such information in anonymised form.

Mr. Neubert: It is not considered appropriate to present this detailed information to the House. It could be produced only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will provide the numbers of health physics monitors employed on monitoring the radiation exposure of the civilian population in Ministry of Defence areas;

(2) if he will provide the number of health physics monitors employed directly on the monitoring of radiation exposure of workers in each Ministry of Defence and privatised Ministry of Defence establishment since 1960;

(3) if he will provide the number of supervisors, by grade, supervising the monitoring of radiation exposure of workers by health physics monitors in each Ministry of Defence and privatised Ministry of Defence establishment since 1960.

Mr. Neubert *[holding answer 24 May 1990]:* The information requested could be provided only at a disproportionate cost. Ministry of Defence establishments ensure that work with ionising radiation is supervised, and exposure monitored, to the extent necessary to enable that work to be carried out in accordance with the requirements of the Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985.

Conventional Forces in Europe

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy that no relevant equipment be moved out of the area of application of the proposed treaty on conventional forces in Europe before such a treaty comes into effect in order to *(a)* deploy the equipment elsewhere or *(b)* sell the equipment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Pre-emptive withdrawal from the area of application of the proposed CFE treaty of equipment of categories likely to be limited under it can undermine the treaty's objectives. We would be seriously concerned at any such redeployment especially where the intention appeared to be to hold the equipment just outside the area of application of the treaty.

Missile Technology Control Regime

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he is considering lowering the range and warhead weight governed by the missile technology control regime; what talks he proposes to have on the regime; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: There are no plans to lower the MTCR range and warhead parameters. A meeting of the MTCR partner countries will take place in Ottawa soon.

Iraq (Chemical Weapons)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has any information about the involvement of the Salman Pak underground plant, 35 miles from Baghdad, in work related to chemical and biological weapons.

Mr. Waldegrave: Iraq has used chemical weapons on a number of occasions in the past, indicating that it has a production capability. We are aware of recent media reports concerning the Salman Pak facility. It is not our practice, however, to comment on information which may be available to us on such matters.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has any information regarding the possession by Iraq of the anti-personnel biological agents tularemia, anthrax and equine encephalitis; whether these agents have been weaponised; and what discussions have been held with the United States administration on these matters.

Mr. Waldegrave: We are aware of recent media reports alleging Iraqi development of biological weapons. Iraq has signed but not ratified the 1972 biological weapons convention which prohibits such weapons. It is not our practice, however, to comment on information which may be available to us on such matters. We have regular consultations with the United States on a full range of issues including chemical and biological weapons.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Tampons

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will review his decision not to require further warning labels, additional to those referred to in his answer of 5 April, *Official Report*, column 804, to be compulsorily provided on the packaging of tampons.

Mr. Forth: No. Toxic shock syndrome is a very rare illness and I am not prepared unnecessarily to frighten women off buying tampons by asking the industry to put a warning about toxic shock syndrome on the outside of the packet. I am however asking it to put a warning on the leaflet inside the packet on how to recognise the symptoms of TSS and the fact that very occasionally it can be fatal: and to put on the packet itself guidance as to what degree of absorbancy should be used.

Company Accounts

Mr. David Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many prosecutions have been initiated by the solicitors' office of Companies house against companies for failure to file accounts by the due date during *(a)* 1 January to 1 February, *(b)* 1 February to 1 March, *(c)* 1 March to 1 April and *(d)* 1 April to 1 May.

Mr. Redwood: Prosecutions for failure to file accounts are initiated against directors, not companies. The table gives details of those commenced by the Department's solicitor since 1 January 1990.

Period in 1990	Prosecutions commenced
January	[1]140
February	80
March	335
April	265

[1] Estimated.

Iraq

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the contracts arising from the April 1989 international exhibition for military production in Baghdad.

Mr. Redwood: We do not have this information, the publication of which would be a matter for the firms concerned.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether his Department has issued any export licences for vacuum pumps to Iraq.

Mr. Redwood: No licences have been granted for the export of vacuum pumps to Iraq in the last year. Information on licences granted prior to this is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Caborn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his answer of 15 May, *Official Report*, column *365*, of the trade delegations that visited Iraq with Government support in 1989-90, 1988-89, 1987-88 and 1986-87, how many companies which made up the delegations have, or had, contracts with the Ministry of Defence.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 21 May 1990]:* One hundred and seventeen of the companies in question appear in the records the Ministry of Defence keeps of firms currently or formerly qualified to bid for defence contracts. It would involve disproportionate cost to identify the number of firms which were awarded contracts.

Mr. Caborn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to his answer of 15 May, *Official Report*, column *365*, of the trade delegations that visited Iraq with Government support in 1989-90, 1988-89, 1988-88 and 1986-87, how many companies and from which sectors of industry made up the delegations.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 21 May 1990]:* Two hundred and ninety-two companies participated in officially supported events in the years in question. They were drawn from a wide range of industries, which our records broadly classified as: healthcare, energy-oil field equipment, electrical-electronic engineering, water technology, automotive transport, domestic appliances-consumer goods, scientific-environmental equipment and mechanical engineering.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps his Department took to satisfy itself that the 10,000 protection kits exported to Iraq were to be used only for non-military purposes.

Mr. Redwood: It is the practice to retain records of export licence applications for no longer than seven years. No information is therefore available on any exports to Iraq which may have taken place before 1983.

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give for each year from 1978 the energy consumption, broken down by fuel, of the buildings occupied by his Department, expressing the figures in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* 1978-79 money terms and *(c)* units of consumption for electricity in kilowatt hours, gas in therms, liquid fuel in litres and solid fuel in tonnes.

Mr. Forth: I am sorry that the information is not available in the form requested.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give the number of energy audits carried out in his Department in the last five years and for each audit a statement of its main conclusions.

Mr. Forth: No full energy audit has been carried out in my Department in the past five years, but energy usage is closely monitored. The Department is investing in energy saving projects with the aim of saving 15 per cent. of energy costs over the next five years.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give the number of dedicated energy managers in his Department and the number of person years devoted to energy management in the latest year.

Mr. Forth: Twenty staff are designated energy managers as part of their duties. The Department devoted about three person years to energy management last year. This does not include the resources deployed by the Property Services Agency in our buildings.

Audit Committees

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any information on the number of companies which have audit committees.

Mr. Redwood: No. There is no requirement to notify the Department of the establishment of an audit committee.

Investment (Cumbria)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will set up an inquiry into the level of inward investment inquiries being referred by the regional office of his Department to the industrial development authorities in Cumbria.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: No. All inward investor inquiries are sent routinely to all regions of the United Kingdom, where the regional development body, INWARD in the case of the north-west, maintains information on local site availability and conditions through regular contact with local authorities and other development bodies. Inquiries are then forwarded to those localities which have indicated their ability to meet the specific needs of the investor.

Hungary

Mr. Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what efforts his Department is making to encourage joint ventures between British and Hungarian companies and between British companies and Hungarian state enterprises.

Mr. Redwood: My Department is doing a great deal. We are providing companies with information about the legislative and fiscal framework for investment in Hungary. My Department also makes available to British business information about specific investment opportunities and details of Hungarian enterprises seeking joint venture partners.

DTI Ministers are actively involved. I myself have led a trade mission to Hungary, and the Secretary of State expects to visit the country next month with a group of business men. Together with the Foreign Secretary, I participated in a major conference on 22 May sponsored by my Department, the CBI and others to draw companies' attention to business and investment opportunities arising from western economic assistance to eastern Europe.

ECGD's investment insurance scheme has recently been expanded to cover eastern Europe; and the Government's know-how fund can now be used to provide support for pre-investment feasibility studies and training of prospective joint venture partners.

Financial Reporting Council

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the members of the Financial Reporting Council, together with information as to their experience, directorships and partnerships.

Mr. Redwood: The membership of the Financial Reporting Council was announced in a press release issued by the council on 17 May, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

CFCs and Halons

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he intends to publish the study commissioned by his Department into the use of chlorofluorocarbons and halons in the United Kingdom and the scope for their recovery for recycling and destruction.

Mr. Forth: I have today published this study in a report entitled "CFCs and Halons: Alternatives and the Scope for Recovery for Recycling and Destruction". Copies have been placed in the Libraries of the House. The report is available on sale from the publishers HMSO.

The Government have made it clear that they are fully committed to the elimination of ozone-damaging CFCs as soon as practically possible, and certainly by the year 2000.

The report finds that by adopting alternatives and developing cost-effective recycling, it would be possible to eliminate virtually all consumption of ozone-damaging chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) in the UK by 1997. It also finds that similar action, particularly on recycling, could allow consumption of halon fire-extinguishing agents to be similarly reduced by the year 2000.

In examining current levels of CFC use, the report finds that the UK halved its consumption of CFCs between 1986 and 1989, thus meeting the controls on consumption in the present Montreal protocol almost 10 years ahead of requirements. The Montreal protocol is to be strengthened at a conference in London at the end of June, against a background of strong calls for complete phase-out of CFCs by the year 2000. This report provides further evidence that UK industry is responding well to this particular environmental challenge and is well placed to meet a more stringent regulatory regime over the next 10 years.

This will, however, require greater recycling of ozone-damaging substances, particularly in the refrigeration, fire-extinguishing and solvent areas. I urge all those involved in producing or using products made with CFCs or halons to increase their level of recycling. This action needs to form part of each company's overall strategy for reducing their use of these substances.

Local authorities and the private sector also have a role to play in the safe disposal of CFCs from domestic refrigerators. The report highlights a number of successful recovery and recycling schemes that have been set up. I hope that this report will encourage others to follow this lead.

Eastern Europe

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the support being given by his Department to the newly emerging democracies in eastern Europe.

Mr. Redwood: My Department seeks to help the process of reform in these countries by encouraging the involvement of British companies in their economic transformation and reconstruction. In particular we provide information on opportunities for direct investment, including joint ventures and other forms of industrial co-operation; for increased exports of goods and services; and for consultancy and management training.

DTI Ministers play their part by receiving incoming delegations and by taking with them groups of business men on visits to those countries. In recent months, the Secretary of State and I have led parties of business men to the USSR, Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Romania. I shall shortly be taking a group of business men with me to the GDR. The Minister for Trade visited the Leipzig fair in support of British exhibitors and attended the recent CSCE conference in Bonn on economic co-operation in Europe.

My Department also encourages British business to take full advantage of the several United Kingdom, EC and multilateral schemes introduced to assist projects of reform and reconstruction in the emerging countries of eastern Europe, including the United Kingdom know-how funds.

The DTI co-sponsored a major conference in London on 22 May which sought to alert British companies to the possibilities of winning aid-financed business in eastern Europe. A DTI official was recently seconded to the joint assistance unit in the FCO to help in the administration of the United Kingdom know-how fund.

In addition the Department continues to offer its established export services and to finance the activities of the East European Trade Council, the BOTB's area advisory group for eastern Europe.

Bankruptcies

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will institute an inquiry or take any other steps to ascertain the reasons for the increase in bankruptcies.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 24 May 1990]:* No.

Environmental Policies

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any proposals to ensure that United Kingdom trade promotes the goal of sustainable development.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 22 May 1990]:* I shall continue to consider the links between trade and environmental policies and their relationship to promoting sustainable development.

Maccorp Holdings Ltd.

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will appoint inspectors to inquire into the affairs of Maccorp Holdings Ltd. and to establish the extent to which the prospectus issued by the company contained false and misleading information about the position and experience of director Arden McClelland.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 22 May 1990]:* My Department is prepared to consider any information my hon. Friend may provide which might warrant an inquiry.

Bankruptcy

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will take steps to increase from £750 the minimum level of debt in respect of which a creditor may in terms of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985 petition for the sequestration of his debtor.

Mr. Redwood: There are no current plans to increase this figure.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will instigate a review of all aspects of the scheme of payment from public funds to trustees in sequestrations under the provisions of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act.

Mr. Redwood: Insolvency service officials are currently undertaking an evaluation of the Scottish bankruptcy system with particular regard to funding.

TRANSPORT

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if his Department is currently assessing the British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. approved design for the transportation of vitrified high-level waste; if compliance with this design is required for transportation by road, rail and ship; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has any plans to allow the transportation of vitrified high-level radioactive waste flasks (i) through the channel tunnel and (ii) overland by rail from Sellafield to shipping ports including Dover; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if it is his policy to agree in advance the overland and sea routes of future exports of vitrified high-level radioactive waste flasks.

Mr. Freeman: Shipments of vitrified high-level waste by any mode of transport will be required to be carried in containers which have been certified by my Department as fully complying with stringent and national and international safety regulations which require safety to be built into the design. Safety does not depend on the choice of route used which is a matter for the carrier.

I understand that a package design is currently under development by British Nuclear Fuels plc (BNFL) but that it may be some months before this design is submitted to the Department for assessment and subsequent approval.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps have been taken by the marine directorate to satisfy itself that the type of ship used by Pacific Nuclear Transport Ltd. to transport vitrified high-level radioactive waste is appropriate to that function; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The ships used by Pacific Nuclear Transport Ltd. are dedicated to the transport of nuclear materials. They operate under schemes of work approved by the Department, which ensure that crew members benefit from national and international radiation protection standards.

The Department has not yet received an application from British Nuclear Fuels plc for the transport of vitrified waste on these ships. Their suitability for carrying this material will be assessed by the marine directorate as part of the Department's approval and certification process.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport under what circumstances radioactive material is kept overnight in parked vehicles at Swynnerton, Stoke-on-Trent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton *[holding answer 24 May 1990]:* I have been asked to reply.

I assume the hon. Gentleman is referring to military vehicles parked at the Army training area at Swynnerton, Staffordshire. As he will appreciate, however, it is the longstanding policy of this and previous Governments neither to confirm nor deny the presence of nuclear materials at particular military locations, or to comment on their methods of transport.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) whether shipments of plutonium nitrate from Dounreay to Workington will cease following the recent decision to abandon fast breeder reactor research at Dounreay; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what type of irradiated fuel flask is used for the shipment of plutonium nitrate from Dounreay to Workington; and if he will make a statement;

(3) when was the first shipment of plutonium nitrate from Dounreay to Workington.

Mr. McLoughlin: Shipments of plutonium nitrate are carried in containers to design No. 1763 and have been certified by my Department as fully complying with stringent international safety regulations. The first such shipment took place in June 1981.

The decision as to whether such shipments will continue is a matter for the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the role of the marine directorate in respect of the transportation of radioactive waste.

Mr. McLoughlin: The marine directorate enforces the Merchant Shipping (Dangerous Goods) Regulations 1981,

as amended, under which the transport of radioactive waste by ships is regulated. The carriage requirements follow the international maritime dangerous goods code published by the International Maritime Organisation which in turn incorporates recommendations issued by the International Atomic Energy Agency. The radioactive materials transport division represents the Department in this agency.

A30

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will indicate his best estimate of the relevant timings of events concerned with the routing and construction of the replacement A30 between Honiton and Exeter.

Mr. Atkins: The Department expects to publish its proposals at about the end of the year. A public inquiry, which will, no doubt, be necessary, could be held in 1991. Subject to the satisfactory completion of the statutory procedures I expect construction work to start in 1993 and then to take up to two years to complete.

EUROSID

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what contribution he is making to the EUROSID project; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: My Department has taken a major role in the development of the EUROSID side-impact test dummy through the transport and road research laboratory. Researchers from TRRL have led the working group within the European experimental vehicles committee which has designed, developed and tested EUROSID. TRRL was responsible for the development of the important thorax of the dummy. The dummy is now fully tested and in production through Ogle Design Ltd. of the United Kingdom.

The Department has similarly taken a lead in development of the full-scale side-impact test procedure for cars. The United Kingdom is pressing for early agreement within the European Community on a side-impact directive incorporating this test. This work is expected to be completed in the next two to three years. When implemented, this should ensure that cars are designed to offer better protection to their occupants in collisions to their sides, saving considerable life and injury. EUROSID is a central requirement of the test, since it measures the likely injury to the occupants.

Northern Line

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to make an official journey on the southern section of the Northern line; and if he will invite hon. Members from those areas of London to accompany him on his visit.

Mr. Freeman: I hope to visit the southern section of the Northern line at the end of this month. I would be glad to do so with the hon. Member.

Travel (London)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has undertaken any survey of reasons for travel in London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The most recent comprehensive source of information on reasons for travel in London is the 1981 Greater London transportation survey carried out by the Greater London council. My Department is planning to conduct a major new survey in 1991 in collaboration with the London Research Centre, British Rail and London Transport.

Information on reasons for travel is also collected in the national travel survey and although this survey does not identify where the travel took place it does provide figures for travel by people resident in London. Some results are given in "Transport Statistics for London", a copy of which is in the Library.

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give for each year from 1978 the energy consumption, broken down by fuel, of the buildings occupied by his Department, expressing the figures in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* 1978-79 money terms and *(c)* units of consumption for electricity in kilowatt hours, gas in therms, liquid fuel in litres and solid fuel in tonnes.

Mr. Atkins: A full answer cannot be provided. I shall write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the number of dedicated energy managers in his Department and the number of person years devoted to energy management in the latest year.

Mr. Atkins: In 1989-90 the Department devoted approximately 2·5 person years to energy management. This included the time of a central energy manager.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the number of energy audits carried out in his Department in the last five years and for each audit a statement of its main conclusions.

Mr. Atkins: The number of energy audits carried out in the Department of Transport were:

	Number
1985-86	0
1986-87	1
1987-88	7
1988-89	4
1989-90	1

In each case a variety of measures to produce energy savings were recommended and have been implemented.

Buscough and Ormskirk Bypasses

Mr. Hind: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will appoint traffic consultants to advise his Department on the line of the Buscough bypass on the A59; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will appoint traffic consultants to advise his Department on the line of the Ormskirk bypass on the A570; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: We shall be inviting competitive offers from selected consultants within the next two months for the design of three schemes in the Liverpool-Preston corridor; the A59 Ormskirk-Walmer bridge improvement (which will incorporate a bypass of Buscough); the A570 Ormskirk bypass; and the A570 Scarisbrook and Pinfold bypass.

WALES

Brymbo Steelworks

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will visit Brymbo steelworks.

Mr. David Hunt: I have recently had meetings with both the owners of Brymbo and their work force, but I have no present plans to visit the steelworks.

Geriatric Beds

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the number of geriatric beds in each district health authority area in Wales in the National Health Service and as a percentage of total beds for 1970, 1979, 1984 and 1989.

Mr. Grist: Available information on the number of beds in specialities designated as geriatric, psycho-geriatric and elderly mentally infirm and as a percentage of total beds is given in the following table; comparable information for 1970 is not available.

	1979		*1984*		*1988-89*[1]	
	Average daily available beds	*Percentage Total beds*	*Average daily available beds*	*Percentage Total beds*	*Average daily available beds*	*Percentage Total beds*
Clwyd	626·7	20·5	577·4	20·0	529·9	20·7
East Dyfed	416·7	19·9	406·0	22·6	401·8	24·8
Gwent	715·2	18·4	984·2	26·8	952·1	28·5
Gwynedd	402·9	25·7	405·9	26·3	456·9	28·7
Mid Glamorgan	822·8	16·6	895·4	18·9	797·2	18·8
Pembrokeshire	139·8	30·0	137·3	29·2	128·1	27·4
Powys	247·6	19·6	247·4	22·8	216·6	22·8
South Glamorgan	448·6	12·5	460·5	13·0	451·6	13·5
West Glamorgan	464·8	17·9	462·2	18·1	468·4	19·8
Wales	4,285·0	18·3	4,576·3	20·5	4,402·6	21·5

[1] Latest available information.

Speech Therapists

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many hearing therapists are employed in each of the district health authorities in Wales; and how many are bilingual.

Mr. Grist: The information requested is not available centrally.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he has taken to ensure proper training and recruitment of bilingual speech therapists in each district health authority in Wales.

Mr. Grist: The Department has encouraged all health authorities in Wales to undertake, as part of their annual manpower resource plans, an assessment of their requirements for bilingual staff and of posts where the ability to practise through the medium of English and Welsh is required. Recruitment to particular posts is an operational matter for individual health authorities. The extent, format and location of education and training for health care professional groups in Wales is being considered within the context of the Department's consultation document "The Health Service in Wales. Towards 2000: Manpower Planning, Education and Training", responses to which are currently being considered.

General Practitioners

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many general practitioners there are in each of the district health authority areas in Wales.

Mr. Grist: The latest available information is published in "Health and Personal Social Service Statistics for Wales No. 16" a copy of which is in the Library.

Home Renovation Grants

Mr. John P. Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the estimated *(a)* spending and *(b)* spending in real terms on mandatory home renovation grants by each local authority for each year since 1979.

Mr. Grist: Since 1979 four types of home renovation grant have been available:

i. Improvement/conversion grants
ii. Repair Grants
iii. Intermediate grants
iv. Special grants

All intermediate grants are mandatory, as are those special grants and repair grants for works carried out in compliance with statutory notices served under housing legislation. It is not possible from data available centrally to estimate the total breakdown between mandatory and discretionary grants.

However, some information on the amounts paid on completed grants by type and by local authority is published for the years 1983 to 1988 in "Welsh Housing Statistics" Nos. 4 to 9, copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

St. David's Airfield, Pembrokeshire

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will visit St. David's airfield, Pembrokeshire;and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: No.

Residential Homes

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the number of new private residential homes for the elderly established in Wales in each of the last four years, by local authority district.

Mr. Grist: The numbers are as shown in the table:

During the year to 31 March

	1986	1987	1988	1989
Clywd	17 (2)	17 (1)	16	7
Dyfed	21 (4)	6	7	15
Gwent	3 (1)	7 (2)	7	2
Gwynedd	8	10	11	13
Mid Glamorgan	4	4 (1)	9	3
Powys	1 (1)	4	1	3
South Glamorgan	22	9 (1)	6	7
West Glamorgan	4 (1)	3	4	1
Wales	80 (9)	60 (5)	61	51

The figures in brackets indicate the number of these homes which have subsequently either closed or ceased to function as primarily private residential homes for elderly people. The number of homes which may have closed from 1 April 1989 to 31 March 1990 is not yet available.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on BSE in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: At 18 May, a total of 948 cases of BSE had been confirmed on 681 farms in Wales. All necessary steps have been taken by the Government to deal with this disease and the consumer can have every confidence in the safety of beef as a wholesome and nutritional food.

Ambulance Service (Emergency Calls)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each Welsh ambulance service area the number and percentage of emergency calls answered within *(a)* eight minutes and *(b)* 20 minutes.

Mr. Grist: The latest available information is given in the table:

Ambulance service: emergency calls during 1988-89

	Calls responded to within eight minutes		Calls responded to within 20 minutes	
	number	percentage	number	percentage
Clwyd[1]	8,647	61·8	13,774	98·5
East Dyfed	4,182	55·0	6,996	92·0
Gwent	15,264	73·4	20,537	98·7
Gwynedd	4,563	54·3	7,996	95·1
Mid Glamorgan	15,553	45·0	32,834	95·0
Pembrokeshire[2]	2,314	44·3	4,576	87·6
Powys	1,545	44·0	2,929	83·5
South Glamorgan	8,176	65·7	12,346	99·3
West Glamorgan[1]	8,324	55·4	14,151	94·3

[1] 1987-88 figures as later figures are not available.
[2] Estimates using a four-week sample.

Education Spending

Mr. John P. Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the estimated *(a)* capital spending and *(b)* capital spending in real terms on educational facilities by each local authority for each year since 1979.

Mr. Roberts: The information requested is shown in the tables:

Gross capital expenditure on education

£000

	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
Cash prices										
Clwyd	4,214	5,482	5,516	5,410	5,366	5,708	5,755	6,367	7,877	7,323
Dyfed	2,308	2,997	2,809	4,153	4,436	3,551	2,853	4,136	6,513	9,030
Gwent	4,383	6,442	4,814	5,201	6,709	6,950	5,707	5,869	7,624	8,019
Gwynedd	1,345	2,376	1,990	1,315	1,584	1,660	1,986	2,051	2,434	2,642
Mid Glamorgan	5,402	7,985	7,810	7,136	7,752	7,460	4,532	6,693	9,595	9,822
Powys	2,269	2,905	2,255	2,193	3,015	1,989	1,410	3,270	3,370	2,358
South Glamorgan	2,241	2,808	2,132	3,896	3,071	2,954	1,889	3,876	4,567	8,278
West Glamorgan	1,977	5,270	4,459	5,142	4,267	3,326	4,911	6,710	8,325	5,848
Total counties	24,140	36,264	31,785	34,446	36,200	33,597	29,042	38,972	50,305	53,320
1988-89 prices[1]										
Clwyd	7,933	8,718	7,989	7,309	6,925	7,018	6,715	7,186	8,438	7,323
Dyfed	4,345	4,765	4,068	5,610	5,726	4,366	3,329	4,668	6,977	9,030
Gwent	8,251	10,244	6,973	7,026	8,659	8,545	6,660	6,625	8,167	8,019
Gwynedd	2,531	3,779	2,882	1,776	2,044	2,041	2,318	2,315	2,607	2,642
Mid Glamorgan	10,168	12,698	11,311	9,640	10,005	9,172	5,289	7,554	10,278	9,822
Powys	4,271	4,619	3,267	2,963	3,891	2,446	1,646	3,691	3,610	2,358
South Glamorgan	4,218	4,465	3,088	5,263	3,964	3,632	2,204	4,375	4,892	8,278
West Glamorgan	3,721	8,380	6,458	6,945	5,507	4,089	5,730	7,574	8,918	5,848
Total counties	45,438	57,668	46,036	46,531	46,720	41,309	33,892	43,986	53,887	53,320

[1] Adjusted to a constant price basis using the GDP deflator.

Private Hospital Beds

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many private beds were available, and how many consultant hours were worked in association with these private beds by consultants employed by the National Health Service in Gwynedd in the most recent available year.

Mr. Grist: On 31 March 1989, the latest date for which information is available, there were 52 beds in private hospitals in Gwynedd. I have also authorised that a maximum of 2,920 bed days may be used by private patients in National Health Service hospitals in Gwynedd in any one year. Information on the number of hours worked by National Health Service consultants in association with these beds is not available centrally.

Local Authority Capital Expenditure

Mr. John P. Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the estimated *(a)* investment in real terms, and *(b)* capital investment on capital programmes other than new build and renovation, by each local authority for each year since 1979.

Mr. David Hunt: The information is shown in the following tables. Information for 1979-80 and 1980-81 was not collected on a comparable basis and is therefore not included.

Capital payments 1981-82 to 1984-85: Cash prices[1]

£000

Local authority	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*
Alyn and Deeside	1,560	1,915	897	1,503
Colwyn	725	1,639	1,417	977
Delyn	1,522	3,358	4,215	6,131
Glyndwr	394	498	323	317
Rhuddlan	581	648	1,183	1,057
Wrexham Maelor	2,548	2,206	2,975	2,551
Carmarthen	824	1,248	1,367	665
Ceredigion	1,025	1,255	1,484	1,335
Dinefwr	242	531	596	401
Llanelli	3,232	3,469	2,890	3,454
Preseli	825	1,470	1,376	2,413
South Pembroke	651	864	935	1,627
Blaenau Gwent	2,105	4,627	3,401	4,246
Islwyn	1,293	596	1,548	2,683
Monmouth	875	742	686	900
Newport	2,518	4,728	6,431	4,394
Torfaen	1,103	2,308	2,236	1,874
Aberconwy	1,183	996	1,032	563
Arfon	1,572	1,066	962	1,011
Dwyfor	481	604	487	582
Meirionnydd	746	644	2,428	427
Ynys Môn	1,315	1,289	1,618	1,205
Cynon Valley	1,044	1,113	1,502	1,653
Merthyr Tydfil	1,768	2,496	2,374	1,870
Ogwr	2,786	3,145	3,956	5,528
Rhondda	2,431	4,839	4,970	3,499
Rhymney Valley	1,901	2,263	2,826	2,319
Taff Ely	2,039	3,239	2,212	2,734
Brecknock	936	860	507	684
Montgomeryshire	713	598	451	264
Radnorshire	206	6	361	377
Cardiff	11,486	9,126	8,162	12,945
Vale of Glamorgan	3,270	2,185	4,000	3,718
Port Talbot	808	1,042	823	850
Lliw Valley	938	3,343	798	1,632
Neath	681	1,520	1,871	1,506
Swansea	5,140	14,228	10,957	9,128
Clwyd	10,228	11,917	15,214	15,716
Dyfed	9,821	13,521	12,851	9,834
Gwent	21,248	32,934	25,644	24,353
Gwynedd	7,300	11,353	8,664	9,172
Mid Glamorgan	15,402	17,969	19,697	21,400
Powys	6,013	5,707	6,347	5,653
South Glamorgan	17,213	19,978	20,869	17,843
West Glamorgan	13,035	15,289	12,489	11,502
Total districts	63,467	86,704	86,257	89,023
Total counties	100,260	128,668	121,775	115,473
Total Wales	163,727	215,372	208,032	204,496

[1] Excluding building of dwellings, renovation of local authority dwellings and renovation grants from local authorities to the private sector.

Capital payments 1985-86 to 1988-89: Cash prices[1]

Local authority	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
Alyn and Deeside	1,465	2,166	2,126	1,762
Colwyn	1,076	1,191	1,212	1,238
Delyn	5,869	5,909	3,813	4,080
Glyndwr	461	767	492	414
Rhuddlan	1,185	2,692	2,735	3,665
Wrexham Maelor	2,586	4,212	5,523	4,004
Carmarthen	1,132	1,359	2,213	2,992
Ceredigion	1,312	1,731	1,368	1,772
Dinefwr	718	886	1,063	1,375
Llanelli	2,307	2,211	4,366	3,440
Preseli	2,259	996	1,402	2,844
South Pembroke	2,101	1,503	3,098	2,167
Blaenau Gwent	3,454	5,311	7,048	7,008
Islwyn	2,628	5,160	4,636	4,941
Monmouth	736	1,773	1,268	2,155
Newport	6,128	7,036	7,350	9,357
Torfaen	2,049	2,079	2,724	5,476
Aberconwy	591	562	908	1,157
Arfon	1,200	997	1,756	3,834
Dwyfor	1,421	2,087	2,085	1,308
Meirionnydd	309	467	1,377	1,694
Ynys Môn	1,763	3,198	3,080	4,118
Cynon Valley	1,478	3,499	4,671	4,088
Merthyr Tydfil	1,225	1,490	2,921	4,293
Ogwr	4,187	6,667	6,697	6,714
Rhondda	4,691	7,734	7,997	8,778
Rhymney Valley	2,291	2,831	5,411	4,518
Taff Ely	1,833	2,048	2,524	2,408
Brecknock	1,017	1,404	2,452	2,604
Montgomeryshire	794	485	885	1,627
Radnorshire	337	341	806	1,017
Cardiff	11,000	11,367	13,529	13,632
Vale of Glamorgan	3,288	4,192	4,190	2,541
Port Talbot	2,895	3,866	2,014	1,853
Lliw Valley	1,143	2,112	1,852	1,704
Neath	3,026	2,612	4,261	3,077
Swansea	7,398	7,805	9,248	11,955
Clwyd	17,072	17,009	22,248	21,871
Dyfed	12,003	16,074	16,001	19,122
Gwent	14,373	17,678	25,236	20,657
Gwynedd	12,161	9,355	10,058	9,213
Mid Glamorgan	19,437	24,144	28,217	29,765
Powys	5,394	8,477	7,278	8,629
South Glamorgan	25,145	26,687	37,585	34,889
West Glamorgan	17,081	19,304	23,862	19,496
Total Districts	89,353	112,746	131,101	141,610
Total Counties	122,666	138,728	170,485	163,642
Total Wales	212,019	251,474	301,586	305,252

[1] Excluding building of dwellings, renovation of local authority dwellings and renovation grants from local authorities to the private sector.

Capital Payments 1981-82 to 1984-85: 1988-89 Prices[1,2]

£000

Local authority	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*
Alyn and Deeside	2,259	2,587	1,158	1,848
Colwyn	1,050	2,214	1,829	1,201
Delyn	2,204	4,536	5,440	7,538
Glyndwr	571	673	417	390
Rhuddlan	841	875	1,527	1,300
Wrexham Maelor	3,690	2,980	3,840	3,137
Carmarthen	1,193	1,686	1,764	818
Ceredigion	1,485	1,695	1,915	1,641
Dinefwr	351	717	769	493
Llanelli	4,681	4,686	3,730	4,247
Preseli	1,195	1,986	1,776	2,967
South Pembroke	943	1,167	1,207	2,000
Blaenau Gwent	3,049	6,250	4,389	5,221
Islwyn	1,873	805	1,998	3,299
Monmouth	1,267	1,002	885	1,107
Newport	3,647	6,387	8,300	5,403
Torfaen	1,598	3,118	2,886	2,304
Aberconwy	1,713	1,345	1,332	692
Arfon	2,277	1,440	1,242	1,243
Dwyfor	697	816	629	716
Meirionnydd	1,080	870	3,134	525
Ynys Mon	1,905	1,741	2,088	1,482
Cynon Valley	1,512	1,503	1,938	2,032
Merthyr Tydfil	2,561	3,372	3,064	2,299

Local authority	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85
Ogwr	4,035	4,248	5,106	6,797
Rhondda	3,521	6,537	6,414	4,302
Rhymney Valley	2,753	3,057	3,647	2,851
Taff Ely	2,953	4,375	2,855	3,362
Brecknock	1,356	1,162	654	841
Montgomeryshire	1,033	808	582	325
Radnorshire	298	8	466	464
Cardiff	16,636	12,328	10,534	15,916
Vale of Glamorgan	4,736	2,952	5,162	4,571
Port Talbot	1,170	1,408	1,062	1,045
Lliw Valley	1,359	4,516	1,030	2,007
Neath	986	2,053	2,415	1,852
Swansea	7,445	19,220	14,141	11,223
Clwyd	14,814	16,098	19,635	19,323
Dyfed	14,224	18,265	16,586	12,091
Gwent	30,775	44,489	33,096	29,943
Gwynedd	10,573	15,336	11,182	11,277
Mid Glamorgan	22,308	24,273	25,421	26,312
Powys	8,709	7,709	8,191	6,951
South Glamorgan	24,930	26,987	26,934	21,938
West Glamorgan	18,879	20,653	16,118	14,142
Total districts	91,923	117,123	111,324	109,456
Total counties	145,212	173,810	157,164	141,977
Total Wales	237,134	290,933	268,487	251,434

[1] Excluding building of dwellings, renovation of local authority dwellings and renovation grants from local authorities to the private sector.
[2] Adjusted to a constant price basis using the GDP deflator.

Capital payments 1985-86 to 1988-89
1988-89 prices[1,2]

£'000s

Local authority	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89
Alyn and Deeside	1,710	2,445	2,277	1,762
Colwyn	1,256	1,344	1,298	1,238
Delyn	6,849	6,669	4,085	4,080
Glyndwr	538	866	527	414
Rhuddlan	1,383	3,038	2,930	3,665
Wrexham Maelor	3,018	4,754	5,916	4,004
Carmarthen	1,321	1,534	2,371	2,992
Ceredigion	1,531	1,954	1,465	1,772
Dinefwr	838	1,000	1,139	1,375
Llanelli	2,692	2,495	4,677	3,440
Preseli	2,636	1,124	1,502	2,844
South Pembroke	2,452	1,696	3,319	2,167
Blaenau Gwent	4,031	5,994	7,550	7,008
Islwyn	3,067	5,824	4,966	4,941
Monmouth	859	2,001	1,358	2,155
Newport	7,151	7,941	7,873	9,357
Torfaen	2,391	2,346	2,918	5,476
Aberconwy	690	634	973	1,157
Arfon	1,400	1,125	1,881	3,834
Dwyfor	1,658	2,355	2,233	1,308
Meirionnydd	361	527	1,475	1,694
Ynys Môn	2,057	3,609	3,299	4,118
Cynon Valley	1,725	3,949	3,004	4,088
Merthyr Tydfil	1,430	1,682	3,129	4,293
Ogwr	4,886	7,525	7,174	6,714
Rhondda	5,474	8,729	8,567	8,778
Rhymney Valley	2,674	3,195	5,796	4,518
Taff Ely	2,139	2,311	2,704	2,408
Brecknock	1,187	1,585	2,627	2,604
Montgomeryshire	927	547	948	1,627
Radnorshire	393	385	863	1,017
Cardiff	12,837	12,829	14,492	13,632
Vale of Glamorgan	3,837	4,731	4,488	2,541
Port Talbot	3,378	4,363	2,157	1,853
Lliw Valley	1,334	2,384	1,984	1,704
Neath	3,531	2,948	4,564	3,077
Swansea	8,633	8,809	9,907	11,955
Clwyd	19,923	19,197	23,832	21,871
Dyfed	14,007	18,142	17,141	19,122
Gwent	16,773	19,952	27,033	20,657
Gwynedd	14,192	10,558	10,774	9,213
Mid Glamorgan	22,683	27,250	30,226	29,765
Powys	6,295	9,568	7,796	8,629
South Glamorgan	29,344	30,120	40,262	34,889
West Glamorgan	19,933	21,787	25,561	19,496
Total districts	104,273	127,250	140,437	141,610
Total counties	143,149	156,574	182,626	163,642
Total Wales	247,423	283,824	323,063	305,252

[1] Excluding building of dwellings, renovation of local authority dwellings and renovation grants from local authorities to the private sector.
[2] Adjusted to a constant price basis using the GDP deflator.

NHS Staff

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many persons were directly employed as staff in the National Health Service for the whole of Wales in *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1984, *(c)* 1987 and *(d)* the latest available date.

Mr. Grist: The whole-time equivalents of staff directly employed by the NHS in Wales, including the Welsh Health Common Services Authority, is given in the table:

Staff in post as at 30 September	Numbers
1979	50,320
1984	54,528
1987	55,882
1989[1]	55,679

[1] Provisional.

These figures are not adjusted to take into account the change in nurses' hours from 40 to 37·5 in 1980.

Social Services

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much each of the county councils in Wales spent on social services *(a)* in total and *(b)* per head for 1979, 1984 and 1989.

Mr. Grist: The information available is given in the following tables. Information for 1979-80 has been given in place of 1978-79 which is not available.

Total county council expenditure on personal social services[1]

	1979-80	1983-84	1988-89
	£ thousand	£ thousand	£ thousand
Clwyd	9,319	15,508	22,245
Dyfed	7,988	11,826	19,004
Gwent	10,326	15,828	24,675
Gwynedd	7,143	10,356	14,731
Mid Glamorgan	17,259	26,037	36,258
Powys	3,335	4,118	6,360
South Glamorgan	11,456	18,360	26,917
West Glamorgan	9,346	16,409	23,503
Total Counties	76,172	118,441	173,693
	£ per head	£ per head	£ per head
Clwyd	23·8	39·2	54·6
Dyfed	24·0	35·3	54·5
Gwent	23·4	36·0	55·4
Gwynedd	31·0	44·6	61·7
Mid Glamorgan	31·8	48·5	67·7
Powys	30·5	37·2	55·4
South Glamorgan	29·3	46·9	66·7
West Glamorgan	25·1	44·8	64·8
Total Counties	27·1	42·2	60·8

[1] Includes gross capital expenditure and net current expenditure.

Factory and Business Rents

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the commercial level of rents on new factory and business lettings in Wales against the rents currently set by the Welsh Development Agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The assessment and negotiation of rents to be charged to tenants of the Welsh Development Agency is a matter for the agency.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what factors are taken into account in the setting of rent levels for new lettings of Welsh Development Agency and Development Board for Rural Wales property; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The Welsh Development Agency and the Development Board for Rural Wales are responsible for assessing and negotiating the level of rent charged to their tenants and in general they seek to obtain full market value. A variety of factors influence rent levels charged by the agencies. These include location, size, and age of premises, as well as rent levels achieved by the private sector and other public sector landlords.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the increase in rents experienced by sitting tenants in Welsh Development Agency properties sold to the private sector; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: None. Rents paid in the private sector are a matter for the parties concerned.

Community Hospitals

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on the basis of the latest available information in Wales, what proportion of patients currently treated in community hospitals would have to be treated in general hospitals in the event of community hospital beds not being available; and if he will fund a study into this matter similar to that undertaken by Kenrick and Davies and published in 1976.

Mr. Grist: During the financial year 1988-89 approximately 11 per cent. of in-patient cases in Wales were treated in community hospitals (hospitals other than teaching, acute 1 and 2, mental illness, mental handicap and speciality hospitals). Their treatment in the event of community hospital beds not being available would be an operational matter for the district health authority concerned on which it is not possible to speculate. A review of the role of community hospitals in Wales was undertaken in 1989 by a working party of the Welsh Medical Committee. Its findings are expected to be presented to my right hon. Friend in the near future. No further studies are intended.

Financial Management

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answers of 8 May, *Official Report*, column 55, and 21 May, in what ways the financial consequences of the delay of the completion of the IBM contract with the Welsh Office of August 1986 were taken into account.

Mr. David Hunt: As I told the hon. Gentleman on 8 May, the details of the settlement between my Department and IBM (UK) Ltd. are in confidence for commercial reasons.

Hip Surgery

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he is taking to help those with a need for hip surgery in Clwyd; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: The provision of hip surgery is a matter for district health authorities in the first instance. In addition, residents of Clwyd who have been on an in-patient waiting list for a hip replacement operation for more than four months and who are willing to travel to South Glamorgan may be referred for surgery at the all-Wales orthopaedic treatment centre in the Prince of Wales hospital, Rhydlafar.

Tourism

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will introduce legislation in order to enable the Wales tourist board to market Wales overseas.

Mr. Roberts: Following consideration of the report by the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs in 1987, improved working arrangements were established as between the British Tourist Authority, the Wales tourist board and the trade, for promoting Wales in overseas tourism markets. We have no plans to introduce new legislation.

Polytechnic of Wales

Mr. Nicholas Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects the consultants appointed to examine the management and financial control arrangements at the polytechnic of Wales to report.

Mr. David Hunt: I have now received the report which my predecessor commissioned from Price Waterhouse. I am placing a copy of the report in the Library.

The report identifies a number of management, budgeting and financial control deficiencies which call for immediate action by the polytechnic or Mid Glamorgan county council to improve the running of the polytechnic and its interface with the local authority. Copies of the report have been made available to the polytechnic and the local authority and I look to them to take early action to consider and put these recommendations into effect.

The consultants have also reported that effective dialogue between the polytechnic and its maintaining authority have come close to breaking down at most levels. That is a very serious situation, one which the consultants consider is highly detrimental to the efficient and effective operation of the polytechnic and potentially damaging to its image in the higher education market place. The report considers the options for the future status of the polytechnic against this unsatisfactory background and recommends that my Department should take over responsibility for its funding.

I will be giving careful consideration to the recommendation that there should be a change in the polytechnic's status as a local authority maintained institution. In doing so I shall be taking account of the polytechnic's special position as the largest higher education institution in the local authority sector in Wales and considering the implications of such a step for the rest of the sector.

All-Wales County Council

Mr. Gwilym Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will estimate the cost of creating and running a new county council for all of Wales with 26 councillors and remit to administer the functions now carried out by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I find the proposal in question insufficiently well developed to justify asking my Department to attempt such an estimate.

Europartenariat 90

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what financial contribution is being made to Europartenariat 90 by *(a)* Welsh Development Agency, *(b)* Welsh Office and *(d)* local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Europartenariat 1990 is sponsored by the European Commission which will be meeting two thirds of the estimated total cost of £750,000. The remaining third is the responsibility of the host region and will be met by the Welsh Development Agency. Local authorities are not making direct financial contributions, but South Glamorgan county council is sponsoring a lunch for delegates on 14 June.

I am delighted that Wales has the honour to host this major event which will provide an excellent showcase for small Welsh companies and the opportunity for them to meet potential business partners from other parts of the European Community.

Departmental Savings

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what were the value-for-money savings in his Department's operations identified by internal audit and internal efficiency arrangements and by external audit and by management consultants retained by his Department between 1983-84 and 1988-89; and what is the amount of those savings fulfilled to date;

(2) what mechanisms exist in his Department for identifying and tracking value-for-money savings in its operations.

Mr. David Hunt: Officials engaged on staff inspection, management services and market testing work have identified possible value-for-money and efficiency savings of £2,368,000 in the period 1983-84 to 1988-89. While it is not always possible to achieve these savings in full because of changes in circumstances or other factors, and it often takes time to secure them in full, savings of £1,842,000 from this source were realised during the period.

Value-for-money savings are also identified in a number of other ways, for example, for audits, efficiency scrutinies, ad hoc reviews, the employment of consultants and the introduction of information technology. In addition, line managers seek savings and efficiency gains when preparing their annual management plans and in the course of their day-to-day activities. Line managers have prime responsibility for realising potential savings identified in these ways, and the results are not collected centrally within my Department.

Education Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will disaggregate for Wales the data contained in tables I, II and III of the Department of Education and Science memorandum contained in the second report of the Select Committee on Education HC 208-II, pp 10-12, session 1989-90.

Mr. Roberts *[holding answer 22 May 1990]:* The information requested is given in the tables.

Table I
Wastage of Maintained Nursery, Primary and Secondary School Teachers

	Leaving between 31 March 1985 and 31 March 1986		*Leaving between 31 March 1980 and 31 March 1981*	
	Number	*Percentage*[1]	*Number*	*Percentage*[2]
Wastage among teachers:				
Within 2 years of qualifying	52	12·5	65	10·2
Within 5 years of qualifying but after 2 years	243	10·7	433	9·2
Within 10 years of qualifying but after 5 years	304	6·6	409	6·9
More than 10 years after qualifying	1,328	7·0	1,110	6·4
All teachers	1,927	7·3	2,017	7·0

[1] As a percentage of all in service in specified group at March 1985.
[2] As a percentage of all in service in specified group at March 1980.

Table II
Wastage of Maintained Nursery, Primary and Secondary School Maths and Physics Graduate Teachers

	Leaving between 31 March 1985 and 31 March 1986		*Leaving between 31 March 1980 and 31 March 1981*	
	Number	*Percentage*[1]	*Number*	*Percentage*[2]
Wastage among Maths graduates:				
Within 2 years of qualifying	4	8·3	1	4·8
Within 5 years of qualifying but after 2 years	10	9·1	11	10·6

	Leaving between 31 March 1985 and 31 March 1986		Leaving between 31 March 1980 and 31 March 1981	
	Number	Percentage[1]	Number	Percentage[2]
Within 10 years of qualifying but after 5 years	11	9·4	4	3·0
More than 10 years after qualifying	21	5·2	20	5·9
All Maths graduates	46	6·8	36	6·0
Wastage among Physics Graduates:				
Within 2 years of qualifying	0	0	1	14·3
Within 5 years of qualifying but after 2 years	5	15·6	4	9·1
Within 10 years of qualifying but after 5 years	2	4·3	5	6·1
More than 10 years after qualifying	14	4·9	7	3·6
All Physics graduates	21	5·6	17	5·0

[1] As a percentage of all in service in specified group at March 1985.
[2] As a percentage of all in service in specified group at March 1980.

Table III
Unfilled vacancies in secondary schools by subject January 1984-1988

	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988[1]	Percentage vacancies[2]
Mathematics	18	18	21	7	6	0·4
Computer Studies	0	8	7	5	3	1·3
Chemistry	3	0	4	2	0	0·0
Physics	8	5	7	4	3	0·7
Biology	4	6	2	1	4	0·8
Other Science	8	9	6	3	7	1·1
French	5	4	11	4	5	0·8
German	1	2	0	0	1	0·7
French/German	0	3	1	1	1	n.a.
Spanish	n.a.	2	0	1	0	0·0
Welsh and other languages[3]	9	4	8	2	7	1·1
English	16	12	15	10	14	1·1
Drama	n.a.	0	4	2	1	1·1
History	3	6	10	1	1	0·2
Social Studies	1	1	5	0	1	0·8
Geography	4	2	13	4	3	0·4
Religious Education	3	8	4	1	0	0·0
CDT	3	8	16	1	7	0·9
Commerce/Business	3	6	5	5	3	1·1
Art/Light Craft	3	2	4	1	4	0·7
Home Economics/Needlework	7	7	8	2	4	0·6
Music	1	5	5	3	2	0·5
P.E.	5	6	11	3	3	0·4
Remedial	2	7	11	6	5	1·0
Careers	0	2	0	0	0	0·0
Other main subjects	6	2	1	0	1	0·5
Combined subjects	5	3	2	0	1	0·5
Total	118	135	181	69	87	0·7
Head vacancies	—	—	—	—	2	—
Deputy Head vacancies	—	—	—	—	2	—
Total vacancies (1988)	—	—	—	—	91	—

[1] Separately identified figures for heads and deputy heads were collected for the first time in 1988 possibly resulting in undercounting in previous years. But to the extent that they were recorded prior to 1988 they will have been allocated to a teaching subject, slightly inflating the number of vacancies in individual subjects relative to their 1988 values.
[2] Percentage vacancy estimates are based on 1988 figures. 1988 subject teacher numbers have been derived by applying 1989 Secondary School Staffing Survey rates on subject teacher numbers to the teacher numbers recorded at January 1988.
[3] Vacancy rates are recorded in the Form 618G and vacancies for Welsh teachers are combined with vacancies in other languages.

EMPLOYMENT

Skill Centres

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a further statement on the sale of the skills training agency.

Mr. Eggar: The delayed sales of the training businesses at Barking, Southampton and Wolverhampton skill centres (including Telford outreach) to Astra Training Services Ltd. were completed on 31 May. This completes the sales of training businesses to the private sector. Fifty one of the 60 skill centres, plus the STA's head office, mobile training service, sales teams and colleges have transferred to the private sector, providing a network of training provision covering the major centres of population in England, Scotland and Wales.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the name and address of each training and enterprise council to be established in Nottinghamshire; and what geographical area each covers.

Mr. Eggar: There are two training and enterprise councils to be established in Nottinghamshire. The addresses and geographical areas covered by each are as follows:

North Nottinghamshire TEC
Edwinstowe Hall Cottage
Church Street
Mansfield
Nottingham NG21 9QA
Boundaries: local authority districts of Bassetlaw, Mansfield, Newark and Sherwood Ashfield.

Greater Nottingham TEC
c/o Employment Department: The Training Agency
Nottinghamshire Area Office
Lambert House
Talbot Street
Nottingham NG1 5GL
Boundaries: local authority districts of Broxtowe, Nottingham, Gedling and Rushcliffe.

Czechoslovakia

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will make a statement on his recent visit to Czechoslovakia;

(2) if he will make a statement on the programme of assistance to Czechoslovakia, recently agreed with his Czech opposite number.

Mr. Howard: I visited Czechoslovakia from 13 to 15 May at the invitation of the Federal Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Mr. Peter Miller, during which time I also had talks with the Prime Minister, Mr. Calfa, other Federal Government Ministers, industrialists and a trade union leader.

Discussions focused on the importance of creating the right climate in which enterprise can flourish, and the more immediate practical help and advice my Department can provide.

On 14 May Mr. Miller and I signed a joint statement on co-operation between our two countries in the labour market area.

We agreed a programme of immediate assistance which will include advice and practical help in establishing arrangements for the training and retraining of adults and in the development of small firms and employment services. We also agreed to set up a joint planning group to co-ordinate assistance and to develop proposals for further projects.

In addition, I have agreed to second a senior official from my Department to the Czechoslovakian Prime Minister's office to provide advice as Czechoslovakia introduces its economic reforms and moves to a market economy, including advice on labour market aspects.

I am very pleased that the Czechoslovak Government have asked my Department for assistance and that we have been able to agree a programme of co-operation. I look forward to the development of a rewarding and beneficial relationship between our respective Ministries.

Youth Training

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list *(a)* YTS training providers and *(b)* YTS training agencies operating in Nottingham.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Small Businesses

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many small businesses were established in 1989, by region.

Mr. Eggar: The latest available information, based on VAT data, is for 1988 and is given in the table. However, early indications from data collected by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise are that there was a net increase in 1989 in the United Kingdom as a whole of 1,500 a week on average, compared with 1,200 a week in 1988.

Value added tax registrations, deregistrations and net change in 1988

	Registrations (thousand)	*Deregistrations (thousand)*	*Net change (per cent.)*
South East	91	61	6
East Anglia	9	6	4
South West	22	15	5
West Midlands	19	14	4
East Midlands	15	11	4
Yorkshire and Humberside	17	13	4
North West	21	18	2
North	8	7	2
Wales	11	8	4
Scotland	14	11	3
Northern Ireland	3	3	2
United Kingdom	230	166	4

Workers' Co-operatives

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will outline the measures he has taken to encourage workers' co-operatives.

Mr. Eggar: The national Co-operative Development Agency, during its period of sponsorship by the Employment Department, has done excellent work in supporting and advising co-operatives. Much of this work is now carried out by other support bodies.

Like any other eligible business, workers' co-operatives can benefit from a number of schemes introduced by the Employment Department to help and encourage small businesses. The loan guarantee scheme, the enterprise

allowance scheme and information and counselling from the small firms service are all examples of the support provided by the Department.

Vocational Training

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much his Department has spent on vocational training in each of the last five years.

Mr. Eggar: Records are kept on the basis of the standard financial year for Government expenditure, which runs from 1 April to 31 March.

The total expenditure on vocational training by the Employment Department Group Training Agency (and its predecessors, the Training Commission and the Manpower Services Commission) in each of the last five years is as follows:

	£ million
1985-86	1,278·0
1986-87	1,461·6
1987-88	1,633·6
1988-89	2,042·4
1989-90	2,669·5

Figures are shown at cash prices and include administration costs net of receipts.

Figures for 1989-90 are provisional and unaudited.

TVEI

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the expansion of the technical and vocational education initiative.

Mr. Howard: At present there are 81 LEAs in TVEI extension. A further 22 LEAs will begin their extension in September 1990. These authorities have now received an offer of funding for 1990-91. The total budget available to my Department for expenditure on TVEI in 1990-91 is £134 million.

Health and Safety

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish the criteria which are being used in assessing the viability of the Neasden Health and Safety Executive office.

Mr. Nicholls: Decisions about the location of offices from which inspectors' work are taken by the Health and Safety Executive on the basis of providing effective coverage as economically as possible.

Underpayment

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average level of hourly underpayment in all wages council industries *(a)* by worker and *(b)* by establishment for 1989.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Self-employed People

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish in the *Official Report* the latest figures of self-employed people in the Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale constituency.

Mr. Nicholls: The latest figures available are for census day in April 1981. In the census returns 1,803 men and 458 women living in the Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale constituency said that they were self-employed.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* scientists, *(b)* technologists and *(c)* engineers are currently unemployed; and how many in each category are currently in work.

Mr. Nicholls: Information is available from the labour force survey (LFS) on the occupation of people in employment in the survey reference week; and the occupation in their previous job of people who were unemployed (on the international ILO definition) and who had left that job less than three years before the survey. The preliminary results of the 1989 LFS with respect to occupation are currently being re-examined, and I will write to the hon. Member when the correct figures are to hand. The available figures from the 1988 LFS are given in the following table:

Spring 1988, Great Britain

Thousand

	Unemployed (ILO definition)	*In employment*
Scientists, physicists mathematicians	[1]—	118
Engineers and technologists[2]	[1]—	443

[1] Sample size too small for a reliable estimate (less than 10 thousand)

[2] It is not possible to separate the figures for engineers and technologists

Workers' Co-operatives

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will consider new arrangements for national insurance contribution rates to be paid by workers in workers' co-operatives.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have been asked to reply.

We have no plans to introduce new arrangements for these workers.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Office Accommodation

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council when he estimates that every hon. Member who wishes will have an office of his own.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Services Committee's second report of Session 1986-87 (HC 378) and first report of Session 1987-88 (HC 561) both recommended that every hon. Member who so wished should have a room of his own by 1995. That objective remains, but its achievement will depend in part upon the effect on plans for the further development of the Bridge street site of London Underground's proposals to extend the Jubilee line through Westminster. The New Building Sub-Committee has now completed its inquiry into this matter, and its report is expected to be published on Friday 8 June (third report from the Select Committee on House of Commons (Services) (HC 334)).

Meanwhile, an additional 60 Members' offices (and space for about 100 Members' staff) will become available in phase 1 of the new parliamentary building during 1991, and plans at present under consideration for the conversion of other space in the Palace of Westminster will, if implemented, provide a significant further number of Members' offices in the main building during the 1992-93 Session of Parliament.

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Lord President of the Council (1) if he will give the number of energy audits carried out in the Privy Council Office in the last five years and for each audit a statement of its main conclusions;

(2) if he will give the number of dedicated energy managers in the Privy Council Office and the number of person years devoted to energy management in the latest year.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Privy Council Office does not operate a system of energy audit, and has no dedicated energy managers.

Members' Expenses

Mr. Dykes: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list *(a)* the different expenses and administrative allowances available to hon. Members and *(b)* similar financial provisions in the parliamentary assemblies of (i) the United States of America, (ii) the Federal Republic of Germany, (iii) France, (iv) Spain and (v) the European Parliament, specifying the different cash amounts in sterling terms.

Sir Geoffrey Howe *[holding answer 18 May 1990]:* The information requested is as follows:

Parliamentary allowances

Country	*Allowance*
SUBSISTENCE AND CONSTITUENCY COSTS	
United Kingdom—Member of the House of Commons	Additional costs allowance of up to £10,138 for those with constituencies outside London for cost of maintaining second home Local allowance of £1,222 for those with constituencies in London
United States—Member of the House of Representatives	—
Federal Republic of Germany —Member of the Bundestag	Constituency costs of [1]DM 5,274 (£1,864) per month, (DM 63,288 (£22,367) per annum) covering: —postage —mileage costs —cost of second home Hotel room bills paid when overnight stays necessary Accommodation and subsistence (variable depending on country visited) paid on official trips abroad
France—Deputy in the National Assembly	Housing allowance of F Fr 848·20 (£89) per month (F Fr 10,178 (£1,068) per annum) Subsistence of F Fr 7,280·36 (£764) per month (F Fr 87,365 (£9,165) per annum)
Spain—Member of Congress of Deputies	—
Member of the European Parliament	Subsistence allowance of ECU 162 (£118) per day for attending meetings within the EC territory and ECU 81 (£59) per day plus cost of over night accommodation etc for attending meetings outside territory
TRAVEL	
United Kingdom—Member of the House of Commons	Free travel to and from House and on parliamentary business in United Kingdom and/or motor mileage allowance of up to 20,000 miles 1,300cc 23·3p (*Further mileage* 12·7p) 1,301cc-2,300cc 35·4p (*Further mileage* 16·7p) 2,301cc + 56·0p (*Further mileage* 28·0p)
United States—Member of the House of Representatives	See official expenses allowance
Federal Republic of Germany —Member of the Bundestag	Free first class season ticket for rail travel, including sleeper tickets[2] Free first class air travel for official internal flights Free use of the Bundestag fleet of official cars for trips within 20 km around Bonn and to Bonn-Cologne airport Free first class flights and local transport costs for official trips abroad
France—Deputy in the National Assembly	Free railway pass for first class and sleeper carriages 40 free internal return flights
Spain—Member of Congress of Deputies	Free travel between constituency and Congress Congressional charge card provided to pay for 1st class train or Club class air travel using national carriers Car travel allowance of 70 Pesetas (£0·40p) per kilometre
Member of the European Parliament	Flat rate travel allowance of ECU 0·62 (£0·45p) per kilometre for the first 400 km and ECU 0·31 (£0·23p) for additional mileage for travel within the community to attend meetings Reimbursement of the return air fare by the most direct route for travel outside EC territory to attend meetings Travel allowance of up to ECU 2,500 (£1,813) per annum for travel in performance of duties other than to attend meetings
OFFICE AND SECRETARIAL ASSISTANCE	
United Kingdom—Member of the House of Commons	Office costs allowance of up to £24,903 (+10 per cent. for pension contributions of any staff employed)

Country	Allowance
United States—Member of the House of Representatives	Clerk hire allowance of US $441,120 (£260,525) to hire up to 18 permanent and 4 non-permanent staff
	Official expenses allowance of between US $104,000 (£61,422) and US $302,000 (£178,360) calculated according to Member's districts distance from Washington. The average is US $146,000 (£86,227). Covers travel, office equipment, district office lease, stationery, telecommunications, mass mailing, postage, computer services, and official expenses in general[3]
Federal Republic of Germany —Member of the Bundestag	Secretarial and research costs of DM 11,600 (£4,100) per month (DM 139,200 (£49,196) per annum) for one secretary in Bonn, one in constituency and one researcher
	Stationery costs of DM 2,063 (£729) per annum
France—Deputy in the National Assembly	Secretarial Allowance of F Fr 18,956 (£1,989) per month (F Fr 227,472 (£23,862) per annum)
	Contribution towards cost of research assistants etc. F Fr 21,460 (£2,251) per month (F Fr 257,520 (£27,014) per annum)
Spain—Member of Congress of Deputies	No provision for individual Deputies. Instead, allowances given to each parliamentary group, pro-rated according to number of seats held, to cover office expenses including rental. Each deputy will soon be provided with own office but no secretarial help will be provided
Member of the European Parliament	General expenditure allowance of ECU 2,342 (£1,699) per month for office management costs, telephone, postage and travel within their Member states[4]
	Secretarial assistance allowance of up to ECU 4,530 (£3,285) per month
	Communications allowance of up to ECU 1,000 (£725) a year towards purchase and running costs of data processing and transmission equipment and a fax machine in the Member's constituency
POSTAGE	
United Kingdom—Member of the House of Commons	Free inland postage
United States—Member of the House of Representatives	See official expenses allowance
Federal Republic of Germany —Member of the Bundestag	Free postage from Bonn (constituency postage is met from constituency costs)
France—Deputy in the National Assembly	Free postage
Spain—Member of Congress of Deputies	Free postage
Member of the European Parliament	See general expenditure allowance
TELEPHONE CHARGES	
United Kingdom—Member of the House of Commons	Free inland telephone charges
United States—Member of the House of Representatives	See official expenses allowance
Federal Republic of Germany —Member of the Bundestag	Free telephone calls from Bonn (worldwide)
France—Deputy in the National Assembly	Free inland calls from Assembly or constituency
Spain—Member of Congress of Deputies	Free telephone calls
Member of European Parliament	See general expenditure allowance

[1] To be reviewed on 31 May along with Bundestag salaries.
[2] Provided without charge by the Federal Railway but set to change. It is unclear whether the Bundestag or Members will pay.
[3] A Member may allocate up to US $50,000 (£29,530) from the clerk hire allowance to supplement the official expenses allowance and vice versa.
[4] Halved in respect of Members who, for no valid reason, have failed to attend at least half the number of plenary sittings.
Note: The sterling figures calculated using rates of exchange at the close of business on 29 May 1990.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

El Salvador

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when a full report will be made public on the findings of the Scotland Yard detectives who have been helping the El Salvadorean authorities with their investigations into the murder in November 1989 of six Jesuit priests.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) on 21 May, Vol. 173, column *33*.

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports and assessments Her Majesty's Government have received on the scope, effectiveness and professionalism of the investigation by the El Salvadorean authorities into the murder in November 1989 of six Jesuit priests.

Mr. Sainsbury: We receive regular reports from our embassy, and have seen reports from a number of other sources, on the progress of the investigation into the killing of six Jesuits, their housekeeper and her daughter on 16 November 1989. The investigation is not yet complete. Meanwhile, eight members of the armed forces in El Salvador remain in detention.

South Africa

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received urging maintenance of all forms of pressure against South Africa.

Mr. Waldegrave: We regularly receive representations on a wide range of issues relating to South Africa from organisations, from members of the public, and from hon. Members of this House.

Mr. Cabom: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) how many British passport holders there are in South Africa;

(2) how many residents of South Africa are eligible for British passports.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office estimates that there are between half a million and 1 million people living in South Africa eligible to hold British passports. The majority have the right to live in the United Kingdom.

Front-line States

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to visit southern Africa-front-line states to discuss their political and trade relationships with South Africa.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has no present plans to do so.

European Commission

Mr. Tom Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to increase the proportion of British citizens employed by the European Commission.

Mr. Maude: Following a recent review of the staffing situation in Community institutions, we have agreed with the Commission a package of measures to improve the recruitment of British nationals. There should be improved publicity on vacancies, competitions and recruitment procedures. We are also establishing a special unit in the Cabinet Office to co-ordinate the recruitment effort and pursue individual issues with the Commission.

Rights of the Child

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans the Government have to act upon the United Nations declaration on the rights of the child.

Mr. Sainsbury: The declaration on the rights of the child was the forerunner of the convention on the rights of the child. The United Kingdom signed the convention on 19 April and will ratify it as soon as possible.

Middle East

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he intends to meet the Government of Israel to discuss the middle eastern peace process; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We regularly discuss with the Israelis the urgent need for peace in the middle east. They are well aware of our view that direct negotiation between Israel and Palestinians is an essential component of the peace process.

China

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many representations have been made by Her Majesty's Government to the Chinese Government on the subject of human rights since the events in Tiananmen square in June 1989.

Mr. Maude: We, either on our own account or acting together with our European partners, have made numerous representations, both formally and informally, to the Chinese Government on the subject of human rights since June 1989. The Chinese Government can be in no doubt of our views on this issue.

Kashmir

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made by Her Majesty's Government to *(a)* the Indian Government, *(b)* the Pakistan Government and *(c)* the United Nations concerning the state of Kashmir.

Mr. Sainsbury: We are in regular contact with both the Indian and Pakistan Governments concerning Kashmir.

We have not made representations to the United Nations.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on his latest contacts with Argentina over the future of the Falklands.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) on 18 April, volume 170, column *845*.

Baltic States

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many representations he has received from *(a)* the Lithuanian association of Great Britain, *(b)* the Baltic Council based in the United Kingdom and *(c)* News from Estonia, on the Helsinki accord and its relevance to recent events in the Baltic states.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have received two letters from the Lithuanian Association of Great Britain, one from the Baltic Council and one from News from Estonia about the relevance of the Helsinki final act to recent events in the Baltics. The question has also been raised in meetings between our officials and representatives of these organisations.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what conditions have to be met to enable Her Majesty's Government to establish full diplomatic relations with Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

Mr. Waldegrave: Before we can establish full diplomatic relations with Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, these republics would need to fulfil our criteria for the recognition of an independent state, which were set out in the answer which I gave to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 19 March, vol. 169, col. *447*.

European Community

Mr. Skinner: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet European Economic Community Foreign Ministers to discuss relationships with non-European Community countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maude: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs next expects to meet EEC Foreign Ministers at the EC Foreign Affairs Council on 18 and 19 June. The agenda is likely to include discussion of relations with certain non-EC countries.

Arms Control

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in what conferences or other international fora Britain is presently involved to secure arms control and weapons system reductions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The United Kingdom is a participant in the two sets of conventional arms control negotiations currently under way in Vienna, and in the chemical weapons negotiations at Geneva. Although the CFE negotiations have made less progress in recent months than NATO would have wished, our aim is still to reach the target of agreement this year.

Schengen Agreement

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the United Kingdom will apply to be part of the Schengen agreement once it has been ratified by the five original signatories.

Mr. Maude: No. Many of the provisions of the Schengen agreement could not be applied to an island.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment has been made of the international and strategic circumstances in which all British nuclear weapons could be negotiated away.

Mr. Waldegrave: Peace has been maintained in Europe as a result of the possession of both nuclear and conventional forces by the United Kingdom and our NATO allies. There can be no question of negotiating away our nuclear deterrent while other states possess or are seeking to acquire a nuclear weapon capability that could pose a threat to this country.

Visa Applications

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the longest and shortest length of time between a male fiancé applying for a visa in Bombay and receiving an interview over the last six months; and what is the average length of time such an applicant has to wait.

Mr. Sainsbury: The average waiting time to interview for all fiancé(e)s applying for entry clearance at the deputy high commission in Bombay throughout the last six months has been nine months. The information requested on the longest and shortest waiting time is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Panama

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement with regard to the Panamanian human rights record.

Mr. Sainsbury: Although there are continuing problems of law and order, our information is that the recently restored democratic Panamanian Government observe normal internationally accepted practice on human rights issues.

Hong Kong

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all the recommendations made by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to the Hong Kong authorities in respect of *(a)* minimum internal space for asylum seekers, *(b)* food and nutrition standards and *(c)* water and sanitation standards in Hong Kong; and what progress has been made in implementing each recommendation.

Mr. Maude: UNHCR has recommended:

(a) A living space standard of 3·5 square metres per person;
(b) A minimum of 2,000 kilo-calories and 50 grams of protein per adult per day;
(c) A water supply standard of 15 to 20 litres of water per day plus sanitation;
(d) Toilet provision on the basis of one for every 20 persons.

Wherever possible UNHCR's recommendations have been accepted. Dietary scales have been drawn up by Hong Kong Government dietitians in consultation with UNHCR technical advisers, with supplementary feeding programmes for vulnerable groups, such as children, pregnant women and the sick. In 1989 the per capita water consumption was about 235 litres per day.

It has not been possible to meet UNHCR's recommendations on space standards and the provision of toilets. Hong Kong's high population density makes the 3·5 square metres per person difficult to achieve. On toilet provision the current standard is 50 people per toilet, which is the standard used in the design of temporary housing for Hong Kong residents.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the present number of Vietnamese boat people held in detention in Hong Kong.

Mr. Waldegrave: On 1 June 1990 there were 54,725 Vietnamese boat people in Hong Kong. Of these, 10,681 have refugee status and are accommodated in open centres. The remainder are held in detention and consist of 8,956 people determined after the full screening procedure not to be refugees, and 35,088 either awaiting screening or the screening results.

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give for each year from 1978 the energy consumption, broken down by fuel, of the buildings occupied by his Department, expressing

the figures in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* 1978-79 money terms and *(c)* units of consumption for electricity in kilowatt hours, gas in therms, liquid fuel in litres and solid fuel in tonnes.

Mr. Sainsbury: It is not possible to provide the information in the detail requested. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office assumed direct responsibility for its fuel and utilities accounts in April this year. Before that, accounts were paid by the Property Services Agency. The data provided in our answers of 30 April and 10 May was obtained from Property Services Agency records.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give the number of dedicated energy managers in his Department and the number of person years devoted to energy management in the latest year.

Mr. Sainsbury: A full-time energy manager post was created in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in October 1989. Before that, about half a person year had been devoted to energy management.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give the number of energy audits carried out in his Department in the last five years and for each audit a statement of its main conclusions.

Mr. Sainsbury: An energy survey, including an energy audit, of the main Foreign and Commonwealth Office in Whitehall was conducted between January and April this year. The consultant's report is due to be presented shortly.

Vietnam

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with representatives of the Government of Vietnam about the opening of a Vietnamese consulate in Hong Kong to help cope with the boat people; what was his response; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Upgrading Vietnam's representation in Hong Kong was discussed during the visit of my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to Hanoi from 18 to 21 February in the context of a satisfactory overall settlement to the problem of returning all non-refugees from Hong Kong to their country of origin.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will support the request from the Government of Vietnam for establishing diplomatic relations with the European Community.

Mr. Sainsbury: We keep this under continuing review. We need to look at a number of factors, one of which is the extent to which Vietnam accepts its obligations under international law to accept back its own citizens.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with representatives of the Government of Vietnam about a bilateral agreement on trade and investment; what is his policy on this; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: A bilateral agreement on trade and investment was discussed during the visit of my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to Hanoi from 18 to 21 February. For the time being, there are no plans to conclude such an agreement.

Mr. Gordon Glass

Mr. Galloway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what steps he is taking to ensure that the Government of Iraq are properly investigating the death of British engineer Mr. Gordon Glass; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will call for a report from Her Majesty's ambassador in Baghdad on the circumstances of the death of British engineer Mr. Gordon Glass; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Her Majesty's embassy at Baghdad is in close touch with the Iraqi authorities who are investigating Mr. Glass's death. The embassy provides regular reports on the situation to the consular department. We will continue to monitor the case.

Departmental Savings

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what were the value-for-money savings in his Department's operations identified by internal audit and internal efficiency arrangements and by external audit and by management consultants retained by his Department between 1983-84 and 1988-89; and what is the amount of those savings fulfilled to date.

Mr. Sainsbury: In the FCO (diplomatic wing) specific value-for-money targets for the last two financial years have already been notified to Parliament in evidence on the public expenditure White Paper, together with staffing savings produced by the 1988-89 top management round. In addition, internal audits and inspections achieved value-for-money savings in 1988-89 of over £2 million. Total VFM savings have been calculated only from 1989-90 onwards. Figures for earlier years are not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

In the ODA, value-for-money savings in departmental running costs and value-for-money achieved on aid-financed goods and services are set out in the annual public expenditure White Paper. On services, savings achieved were £3·5 million in 1986-87; £5·7 million in 1987-88 and £8·41 million in 1988-89. Figures for earlier years are not readily available.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what mechanisms exist in his Department for identifying and tracking value-for-money savings in its operations.

Mr. Sainsbury: In the diplomatic wing of the FCO, targets for value-for-money savings are set each year by budget-holding departments at home and posts overseas. The ODA also sets such targets. Progress towards meeting targets is reviewed through the year. Inspectors and internal auditors also identify value-for-money savings as well as evaluating the controls established by management to secure VFM. Tables of VFM targets for the last and current financial years have been presented to Parliament in the diplomatic wing and ODA evidence on this year's public expenditure White Paper.

Mr. Jonathon Moyle

Mr. Galloway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his reply of 30 April, *Official Report*, column *402*, if he will make a further statement on the investigations into the death of Mr. Jonathon Moyle.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 30 April. Investigations by the Chilean authorities into the death of Mr. Jonathon Moyle are continuing. British consular officers in Santiago remain in close touch with those authorities. They stand ready to assist in any way they properly can.

Ambassadors (Grading)

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what criteria are taken into account in determining the grading of ambassadors.

Mr. Sainsbury: In determining the grading of ambassadorial posts account is taken of the extent of British interests—political, commercial, financial and defence—at stake in the country of accreditation. The nature of inter-governmental business transacted by the head of mission, the level of demand from Whitehall Departments for policy advice and reporting and the degree of access to the leadership of the country are also important. The size of the mission and the consequential management role are further elements in the consideration of grading.

Ivory

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his reply of 8 May, *Official Report*, columns *26-27*, how much of the ivory seized was *(a)* being exported *(b)* being imported and *(c)* neither; and what was the estimated number of elephant tusks represented by the 769·9 kg of raw ivory.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 17 May 1990]:* None of the ivory seized was being exported from Hong Kong; 702·5 kg were seized while in transit through Hong Kong. The remainder were import seizures. The Hong Kong authorities estimate that the 769·9 kg of raw ivory seized represented approximately 250 tusks.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current tradeable ivory stock held in Hong Kong; and to which countries ivory has been exported since he last answered a similar question.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 21 May 1990]:* On 11 May 1990 the tradeable ivory stock held in Hong Kong was 353 tonnes (to the nearest tonne). In the period between 30 March 1990, when I last answered a similar question from the hon. Member, and 11 May 1990, the Hong Kong CITES management authority has been notified of the following exports:

	Kilogrammes
China	2,339·7
South Korea	6·6
Mexico	9·8
Taiwan	1·9
Saudi Arabia	8·8

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will provide a list of all countries for which ivory export permits have been issued by the authorities in Hong Kong since the entering of the reservation in respect of ivory trade.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 21 May 1990]:* In the period since the entering of the reservation up to 19 May 1990 licences have been issued for the export of ivory to the following countries: China, South Korea, Mexico, Taiwan and Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his reply of 8 May *Official Report* columns *26-27*, what were the countries of export of ivory seized by the Hong Kong authorities.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 17 May 1990]:* The countries of export of the seized ivory in question were Singapore, Canada, Taiwan, China, Thailand, India and Korea.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if any mammoth ivory has been imported into Hong Kong in the past 12 months.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 17 May 1990]:* The Hong Kong Government's trade statistics do not indicate whether any mammoth ivory has been imported into Hong Kong in the past 12 months. Nor does the CITES management authority have this information since mammoth ivory is not controlled under CITES.

Endangered Species

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his reply of 8 May, *Official Report*, columns *26-27*, what was the intended fate of the *(a)* monkey, *(b)* live pangolin and meat, *(c)* parrots, *(d)* great salamander and *(e)* live owl.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 17 May 1990]:* As I stated in my answer to the hon. Member on 5 April, confiscated endangered species are disposed of by the Hong Kong authorities by one of the following methods: live animals are released to the wild; specimens are sent to zoos, educational and scientific institutions or other CITES authorities; and perishable items are incinerated.

Youth Exchanges

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set out his policy regarding the encouragement of youth exchanges between the United Kingdom and *(a)* the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and *(b)* other countries in eastern Europe in the light of recent developments in those countries.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 21 May 1990]:* We believe youth exchanges are an important vehicle for improving international understanding and relations between people at an individual level.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) how many young people were assisted financially, directly or indirectly, by the Government *(a)* individually or *(b)* as members of

organised groups, to participate in youth exchange visits between the United Kingdom and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics during each of the past 10 years;

(2) how many young people were assisted financially, directly or indirectly, by the Government *(a)* individually or *(b)* as members of organised groups, to participate in youth exchange visits between the United Kingdom and the countries of eastern Europe including the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics during each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 21 May 1990]:* No figures are available for individual youth exchange visits between the United Kingdom and the USSR and countries of eastern Europe. The following figures for organised groups are available only from 1985 when the youth exchange centre was set up. Figures for the past 10 years could not be obtained without disproportionate cost.

	USSR	*E Europe and USSR*
1985-86	263	1,609
1986-87	344	1,840
1987-88	382	1,724
1988-89	352	1,853
1989-90	819	2,822

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) how much money was *(a)* budgeted and *(b)* paid out by his Department in respect of youth exchange visits between the United Kingdom and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in each of the past 10 years;

(2) how much money was *(a)* budgeted and *(b)* paid out by his Department directly or via intermediary bodies in respect of youth exchange visits between the United Kingdom and the countries of eastern Europe, including the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 22 May 1990]:* We have statistics only for the youth exchange centre (YEC) which is funded by FCO (80 per cent.) and DES (20 per cent.) and administers youth exchanges on our behalf. The following figures are available only from 1985 when the YEC was set up. Figures for the past 10 years could not be obtained without disproportionate cost.

	Budgeted for Eastern Europe, including USSR £	*Paid out for Eastern Europe, including USSR* £
1985-86	74,000	81,000
1986-87	74,500	87,000
1987-88	65,000	90,000
1988-89	63,000	95,000
1989-90	63,000	179,000

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) how much money has been budgeted for the present year and how much is projected for 1991 *(a)* for the promotion of youth exchange visits and *(b)* to directly assist such exchanges between the United Kingdom and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics;

(2) how much money has been budgeted for the present year and how much is projected for 1991 *(a)* for the promotion of youth exchange and *(b)* to directly assist such exchanges between the United Kingdom and the countries of eastern Europe, including the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 22 May 1990]:* For the financial year 1990-91, £653,000 has been budgeted for the promotion of youth exchanges throughout the world, of which £90,000 has been set aside for the countries of eastern Europe, including the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Similar figures are not available for the financial year 1991-92.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Frank Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn), *Official Report*, 11 May, columns 249-50, what volumes of radioactive waste are produced each year at each United Kingdom establishment in each territory to which it makes reference; and what form of transport is used to return these wastes to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Neubert: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the replies that my hon. Friend the Member for Hove (Mr. Sainsbury) gave on 20 January 1988, at columns *762-63*, 25 January 1989, at column *653*, and 13 July 1989 at column *589*.

The form of transport used would be that most appropriate to the circumstances, but would always conform with the Secretary of State's assurances that conditions would be no less stringent than those applying internationally to the movement of civil radioactive material. It is not our practice for reasons of national security to give a complete breakdown of radioactive waste arisings at all our defence establishments.

European Community

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current negotiations Her Majesty's Government are having with other European Community countries concerning visa requirements for non-EEC nationals after 1 January 1993.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have been asked to reply.

The position remains as stated in my right hon. and learned Friend's reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) on 20 December at column *276* following the last meeting of Immigration Ministers. In the usual way my right hon. and learned Friend will report the outcome of the next meeting later this month.

Overseas Voters

Mr. Caborn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give a breakdown of the costs of the Government's "Keeping your Vote When Living Abroad" campaign for each of the countries in which this campaign is being run.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling) on 30 April at columns *396-98*.

British Antarctic Bases

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether any British Antarctic bases are presently under reconstruction; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: The British Antarctic Survey's Halley base is presently being reconstructed.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Finance

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish *(a)* the 1990-91 standard spending assessment and *(b)* the actual budget announced for 1990-91 for each major service block for each authority in Northamptonshire.

Mr. Chope: The available information is as follows:

Comparison of Standard Spending Assessment (SSA) and 1990-91 Budgets

	SSA £'000	*Budget £'000*
Corby		
Education	0	0
Personal Social Services	0	0
Police	0	0
Fire and Civil Defence	0	0
Highway Maintenance	0	68
Other Services	3,499	4,398
Interest Receipts	−427	−504
Other Capital Financing	887	1,538
Total SSA/Net Revenue Exp	3,959	5,500
East Northampton		
Education	0	0
Personal Social Services	0	0
Police	0	0
Fire and Civil Defence	0	0
Highway Maintenance	0	17
Other Services	3,877	2,833
Interest Receipts	−253	−832
Other Capital Financing	360	1,946
Total SSA/Net Revenue Exp	3,985	3,964
Kettering		
Education	0	0
Personal Social Services	0	0
Police	0	0
Fire and Civil Defence	0	0
Highway Maintenance	0	334
Other Services	4,928	4,965
Interest Receipts	−347	−1,090
Other Capital Financing	523	630
Total SSA/Net Revenue Exp	5,104	4,839
Northampton		
Education	0	0
Personal Social Services	0	0
Police	0	0
Fire and Civil Defence	0	1
Highway Maintenance	0	887
Other Services	13,325	15,829
Interest Receipts	−1,001	−5,041
Other Capital Financing	1,617	5,162
Total SSA/Net Revenue Exp	13,941	16,838
Wellingborough		
Education	0	0
Personal Social Services	0	193
Police	0	0
Fire and Civil Defence	0	0
Highway Maintenance	0	178
Other Services	4,382	3,694
Interest Receipts	−315	−760
Other Capital Financing	481	−788
Total SSA/Net Revenue Exp	4,549	2,517
Northamptonshire		
Education	179,549	190,270
Personal Social Services	34,231	40,631
Police	18,550	20,205
Fire and Civil Defence	8,662	8,862
Highway Maintenance	20,428	20,512
Other Services	18,425	17,827
Interest Receipts	−8,496	−6,534
Other Capital Financing	25,606	22,056
Total SSA/Net Revenue Exp	296,955	313,829

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what he estimates would be the saving in public expenditure if the several services administered by county councils were transferred to district councils assuming that expenditure continued to be related to the standard spending assessment.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 8 May 1990]:* It is not possible to estimate. The only information available is the savings resulting from the abolition of the metropolitan county councils and the GLC in April 1986. The overall manpower saving achieved immediately following abolition was estimated at some 6,300 posts. The projected long-term annual savings resulting from those staff savings were estimated to be some £100 million. Since the shire county councils are responsible for such major services as education and social services, which the GLC and metropolitan county councils were not, the information is of little direct relevance.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East on 15 May, if he will give the population for each of the local authority areas listed in his reply, together with details of their central Government financial support for 1990-91, under the headings *(a)* revenue support grant, *(b)* non-domestic rates, *(c)* current specific grants within aggregate Exchequer finance, *(d)* current specific grants outside aggregate Exchequer finance, *(e)* credit approvals, *(f)* capital grants and *(g)* the totals of these categories.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 21 May 1990]:* The information is given in the table. Capital grants information is not available except for transport supplementary grants.

	Relevant population '000s	(a) Revenue support grant £ million	(b) Non domestic rates £ million	(c) Current specific grants within AEF £ million	(c) Current specific grants outside AEF £ million	(d) Basic credit approvals £ million	(e) Transport supplementary grant £ million	Total of columns (a) to (e) £ million
Avon	711·5	111·8	208·1		112·7	48·4	6·7	487·7
Buckinghamshire	469·7	97·3	137·4	34·5		41·5	21·1	1·2	333·0
Derbyshire	714·0	100·3	208·8	46·7		90·5	45·0	0·6	491·9
Dorset	502·7	46·4	147·0	35·0		64·8	18·4	2·9	314·5
Durham	456·1	82·2	133·4	32·8		61·1	30·1	2·4	342·0
Isle of Wight	98·7	15·8	28·9	5·4		14·1	6·5	0·4	71·1
Kent	1,146·1	220·1	335·3	72·6		123·0	55·9	12·6	819·5
Lincolnshire	452·5	79·0	132·4	29·4		49·5	21·6	1·6	313·5
Northumberland	229·2	41·9	67·0		40·5		13·2	1·5	164·1
Surrey	782·7	83·3	228·9	40·9		74·4	19·5	6·3	453·3
Warwickshire	364·9	48·0	106·7		74·2		11·7	0·5	241·1
West Midlands	1,888·4	785·1	552·4		538·3		175·9	16·7	2,068·4
West Sussex	546·8	55·0	159·9	32·6		54·6	22·9	4·5	329·5
Wiltshire	419·8	64·3	122·8	27·8		47·1	26·4	3·0	291·4

The total of current specific grants is given where the breakdown requested is not available.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on how many occasions he met Lady Porter in December, January, February and March to discuss matters relating to the community charge.

Mr. Portillo: There was one meeting between the Secretary of State and Lady Porter during that period at which a wide range of issues was discussed including matters relating to the community charge.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on how many occasions officials from his Department met officials of Islington council in December, January, February and March to discuss matters relating to the community charge.

Mr. Portillo: None.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to what extent consideration of enhanced population in departmental calculations of community charge levels in Westminster is influenced by revenue from car parking.

Mr. Portillo: The weight given to the enhanced population indicator in the standard spending assessment for "All Other Services" is informed by statistical analysis of the variation in past expenditure by authorities on these services. The measure of expenditure used for this analysis excludes any income from car parking charges for all authorities including the City of Westminster.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his written answer to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East of 21 May, if he will publish in the *Official Report* equivalent figures for each local authority area in England for 1990-91 with the estimates of the actual sums raised from items (i), (ii) and (iii) also being presented in appropriate percentage terms.

Mr. Chope: Information is not yet available for each local authority area in England. The proportions of revenue support grant, non-domestic rates and current specific grants for the areas listed in the *Official Report* for 21 May in answer to the hon. Member's question, are as follows:

	Revenue support grant	Non domestic rates	Percentage current specific grants
Avon	25·8	48·1	26·1
Buckinghamshire	31·3	44·2	24·5
Derbyshire	22·5	46·8	30·7
Dorset	15·8	50·1	34·1
Durham	26·6	43·1	30·3
Isle of Wight	24·6	45·0	30·4
Kent	29·3	44·6	26·1
Lincolnshire	27·2	45·6	27·2
Northumberland	28·0	44·8	27·2
Surrey	19·5	53·5	27·0
Warwickshire	21·0	46·6	32·4
West Midlands	41·9	29·4	28·7
West Sussex	18·2	53·0	28·8
Wiltshire	24·5	46·9	28·6

Actual values are given in the reply of 21 May.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what consultations he has had with disability organisations on the effects of the community charge on physically disabled people and their carers;

(2) what representations he has received regarding the effects of the community charge on physically disabled people and their carers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I am not aware of any recent consultations with such organisations but I continue to receive representations on a number of aspects of the community charge. The position of the physically disabled and their carers is taken into account in the community charge system. Those who are resident and receiving care or treatment in a hospital, residential care home, nursing home, mental nursing home or hostel, as defined in community charge legislation, are exempt from the personal community charge. Certain low-paid care workers are also exempt. Those who leave their own homes to care for a disabled person, or to receive care, will not be liable to pay the standard community charge for at least a year after leaving their homes. Many disabled people subject to the personal community charge will qualify for community charge benefit which may reduce bills by up to 80 per cent. Income support has been adjusted with respect to the remaining 20 per cent. liability its recipients will face. The rules for community charge benefit and income support both make special allowance for the disabled and there is additional help within the transitional relief scheme for those pensioners and disabled people who were not former ratepayers.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the average domestic rates bill per household in *(a)* 1979-80 and *(b)* 1988-89 for Blyth Valley, North Tyneside, Newcastle and Wansbeck.

Mr. Chope: The figures are:

	1979-80 £	*1988-89* £
Blyth Valley	134	430
North Tyneside	151	485
Newcastle-Upon-Tyne	175	452
Wansbeck	120	375

Dog Registration

Sir Gerard Vaughan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider introducing compulsory dog registration for those breeds of dog known to be potentially dangerous and used as guard dogs.

Mr. Trippier: The Government have no such proposals.

FA Cup Final (Replay)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider the implications for crowd control of the allocation of tickets for the Football Association cup final replay; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: Each finalist received an allocation of 28,750 tickets for segregated areas of the ground. The remaining tickets were sold on a segregated basis under the supervision of the police who were content with these arrangements.

Recycled Paper

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress Her Majesty's Government have made in using recycled papers for document production by (i) Government Departments, (ii) public inquiries and (iii) other quasi-governmental organisations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The policy on the use of recycled paper in Government Departments and other organisations is for each to determine in the light of their own needs. My Department is currently testing recycled photocopying paper and additional tests are to be conducted on offset litho paper and computer listing paper. If the trials are successful these uses will be added to the existing use of recycled paper for envelopes and letterheaded paper. The Government's recycling advisory group has been examining the broader market issues that affect the wider use of recycled paper and Ministers are considering further action that could be taken by Government and other public bodies.

Peat

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the timetable for the Nature Conservancy Council's national peatland resource inventory.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Nature Conservancy Council's national peatland resource inventory is being undertaken as a phased programme. The results of an inventory of peat soil resources will be published in the latter part of this year, as will those of sample studies of living lowland bogs. The report on the full inventory and broad classification of living upland bogs will be available in early 1991, while a companion full report on living lowland bogs may not be available until 1996.

Pollution Inspectorate

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the total number of inspections carried out by inspectors within Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, in each year since its commencement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Details of inspection visits carried out in 1987-88 and 1988-89 are contained in Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution's MINIS 9 and MINIS 10 returns, available in the Library. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave details of inspections in 1989-90 in the answer he gave on 22 May 1990 to the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor).

Carver Report

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whom he has consulted and what was discussed in forming the Government's response to the Carver report.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Department has given careful consideration to all aspects of the recent report of the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee on the reorganisation of the Nature Conservancy Council. The continuing discussions between the Government, the existing agencies and the chairman designate of the successor bodies have taken full account of the recommendations in the report. The Government's response to the report was published on 17 May and I refer the hon. Member to the reply which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside. (Mr. Colvin) on Thursday 17 May at column *512*.

Hazardous Waste

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how producers of significant quantities of special waste will be covered by an authorisation through integrated pollution control; how he intends to define the circumstances when producers of significant amounts of special waste will be encompassed by integrated pollution control; what sectors of industry will be so covered; and how many firms will be involved;

(2) how many of each type of plant will be covered by integrated pollution control; and how often he envisages Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution staff will be inspecting such plants.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Regulations made under clause 2 of the Environmental Protection Bill will prescribe processes for integrated pollution control (IPC). Processes prescribed for control will generally be those which are the most potentially polluting and will therefore include those releasing significant quantities of special waste. Such processes will need a prior authorisation from HMIP which will set out specific conditions relating to the

operation of the process. The use of the best available techniques not entailing excessive cost will be required to prevent or minimise the release of prescribed substances and render all releases harmless.

IPC processes may release prescribed substances to more than one environmental medium. It is not possible to provide a separate figure for the number of processes prescribed on the grounds of their special waste releases. A list of processes which it is proposed to prescribe for IPC was placed in the Library of the House on 27 April, in response to a question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Porter), at column *343*. Some 5,000 installations in England and Wales are estimated to fall within the proposed categories.

The frequency of inspection will be judged individually for each installation according to its nature, potential for release and other factors.

Departmental Grants

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the non-governmental organisations in receipt of grants from his Department in 1989-90, and the size of each grant.

Mr. Chris Patten: I have today placed the information in the Library.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will place in the Library a list of all sites of special scientific interest his Department considers to be of national importance.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No. Such a document could be produced only at disproportionate cost. SSSIs are notified by the Nature Conservancy Council on the basis that the series of sites as a whole should contain adequate representation, in the form of the best examples, of the total countrywide range of natural wildlife habitats, geological features and landforms. These may be of local, national or international significance.

Pollution

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will take steps to require disclosure of information about the nature of pollution incidents within two weeks after they occur;

(2) if he will amend legislation on trade secrets so that waste disposal authorities are required to disclose specific information about the nature of industrial wastes;

(3) if he will publish the results of the monitoring of chemical discharges into sewers.

Mr. Trippier: Information about releases from industrial processes coming under part I of the Environmental Protection Bill, including pollution incidents, discharges into sewers and the nature of industrial wastes, will be placed on public registers of information as a matter of course. The terms of an EC directive on public access to information which the United Kingdom played a leading role in negotiating will also require environmental information to be made available on request.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution will publish the identities of waste disposal authorities which fail to meet standards and local authorities which accept hazardous waste into dumps in contravention of their licences.

Mr. Trippier: Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution is currently undertaking trial audits of a small number of waste disposal authorities. Once the results of these have been evaluated, a planned programme of audits is to be introduced and it is the inspectorate's intention that the reports of these will be published. The reports will clearly identify any perceived inadequacies by the authorities concerned.

Waste disposal authorities are currently responsible for ensuring that all operations, including those carried out by the authorities themselves, are properly controlled. There are no central records of occasions when licence conditions are breached. The Environmental Protection Bill contains provisions that records of enforcement action taken by the waste regulation authorities, which will be created by the Bill, will be contained on registers available to the public, and that the authorities must publish annual reports on their inspection and enforcement activities.

Housing

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many private and public authority homes were built in each of the past five years in the London borough of Greenwich;

(2) how many private and public authority homes were built in each of the past five years in the constituency of Peterborough;

(3) how many *(a)* private and *(b)* public authority homes were built in each of the past five years in the constituency of Wiltshire, North.

Mr. Chope: The Department collects housebuilding statistics for local authority areas. Information is available for the London borough of Greenwich, Peterborough city council, which includes the constituency of Peterborough, and parts of two others and North Wiltshire district, which covers the same area as the constituency. Figures for dwellings completed for the years 1985 to 1987 appear in tables 1.6 and 1.8 of "Housebuilding in England by Local Authority Areas 1980 to 1988", and the latest figures for 1988 and 1989 in table 1 of "Local Housing Statistics No. 93". Copies of both publications are in the Library.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many private and public authority homes were built in each of the past five years in the constituency of Northavon.

Mr. Chope: The Department collects housebuilding statistics for local authority areas. Information is available for Northavon district council area which includes the constituencies of Northavon and part of Bristol, North-West. Figures for dwellings completed in the years 1985 to 1987 appear in tables 1.6 to 1.8 of "Housebuilding in England by Local Authority areas 1980 to 1988", and the latest figures for 1988 and 1989 are in table 1 of "Local Housing Statistics No. 93". Copies of both publications are in the Library.

Planning Appeals

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many planning appeals refused by local authorities were granted by the inspector on public inquiry in 1979, 1984 and 1989 where *(a)* no structure or unitary development existed and *(b)* a structure or unitary development plan had been agreed.

Mr. Moynihan: I regret that the information requested is not available for 1979 and 1984 cases and could be obtained only at disproportionate expense for 1989 cases.

London Borough of Ealing

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has had any formal communications from the leader of the London borough of Ealing since 10 May; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: I am not aware of any formal communications from the leader of the London borough of Ealing since 10 May, but I recently met him for an informal discussion and congratulated him upon his success in the recent local government election.

Action for Cities

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the cost of the action for cities anniversary event he hosted in Cleveland on 28 February; and what was the cost of these events on a national level.

Mr. Portillo: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the then Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities to my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) on 4 April. The locally incurred cost of the action for cities anniversary event in Cleveland on 28 February was £6,200.

Water Tables

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment by how much on average water tables have fallen since 1968 in each water authority area.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: This information is not held centrally.

Domestic Sewage

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what feasibility studies have been undertaken by his Department regarding the use of domestic sewage as a substitute for agrochemicals and peat by removing toxic elements in sewage sludge at source.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No feasibility studies have been carried out by my Department into the use of sewage sludge as a substitute for agrochemicals and peat. Some 49 per cent. of sewage sludge is applied to agricultural land in England and Wales.

Sulphur Dioxide (London)

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much sulphur dioxide there is on average and at maximum levels in the air in London.

Mr. Trippier: As part of the national pollution monitoring network, SO_2 is measured at two sites in London. The provisional annual mean and peak concentrations (in parts per billion) for 1989-90 are as follows:

Site	*Annual mean*	*Peak*
Cromwell Road	16·6	185
Central London	10·7	226

Data for peak values should be viewed in the context of international agreements protecting human health, which specify mandatory concentration limit values linked to exposure for a period of time. SO_2 concentrations are controlled by EC directive 80/779; the limit values it specifies have never been breached in London since the directive came into force.

Drinking Water

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in how many cases during the past 12 months toxins have been found in drinking water in England and if he will analyse these to specify *(a)* any recognised or suspected carcinogens, *(b)* any recognised or suspected co-carcinogens and *(c)* any recognised or suspected mutagers.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Traces of many chemicals have been detected on occasion in water supplies, but their presence could not always be quantified because of their low concentrations. Medical advice has been that at these low concentrations, if any risk to health existed, it was likely to be extremely small. A sufficiently large and lengthy exposure to some of those chemicals has been shown to be toxic, carcinogenic or mutagenic in appropriate test systems, but there is no evidence that water consumers have been subject to such exposure during the past 12 months.

Homelessness

Dr. Hampson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will reconsider his decision to withdraw funding from National Debtline, in the light of rising mortgage defaulters.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This year we have trebled the funds available under section 73 of the Housing Act 1985 to £2 million. Half will go to a new homelessness advice service involving CABs, SHAC and Shelter. A key aim of this service is to prevent homelessness cases from occurring through timely and accurate general advice on debt and financial planning. The remaining £1 million goes to a total of 27 bodies providing direct assistance and practical help to single homeless people and rough sleepers. I have received a number of representations on behalf of National Debtline, the Birmingham Settlement's Housing Debtline, but I will not raise hopes of further funding this year: all the funds are earmarked.

Sir Trevor Skeet: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the reasons why his Department discontinued a section 73 grant to Homes for Homeless People.

Mr. Michael Spicer: This year £2 million has been allocated to voluntary bodies concerned with homelessness—three times last year's total. Half will go to a new national homelessness advice service based on citizens'

advice bureaux and involving Shelter and SHAC, and half to a total of 27 bodies providing direct assistance and practical help to single homeless people and rough sleepers. Priority in choosing successful applications has been given to projects which will either take single homeless people off the streets or work directly with young people, persuading them not to leave home and/or come to London.

Jones Brothers Building

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the reasons for his Department's refusal of the urban development grant application submitted jointly by the John Lewis Partnership and the London borough of Islington in respect of the Jones Brothers building in Holloway road, London N7.

Mr. Moynihan: The application for urban development grant towards the refurbishment of the department store was rejected in August 1985 on the ground that the project did not offer good value for money in terms of the new jobs and other benefits likely to arise.

Uniform Business Rate

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what would be the cost of exempting from the uniform business rate any business the sole owner of which is principally resident in the same premises from which the business is conducted.

Mr. Chope: The information for which my hon. Friend asks is not available. However, the cost of exempting from non-domestic rates all composite hereditaments (that is, properties which are partly non-domestic and partly domestic) would be £910 million a year in England, without the transitional arrangements.

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the number of dedicated energy managers in his Department and the number of person years devoted to energy management in the latest year.

Mr. Chris Patten: My Department currently has one dedicated energy manager and three other officials who contribute to energy conservation. The total staff effort, which does not include that available from the Property Services Agency, represents an approximate total of 1·5 person years.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the number of energy audits carried out in his Department in the last five years and for each audit a statement of its main conclusions.

Mr. Chris Patten: A total of eight energy audits of offices and specialised sites in London and the regions carried out by external consultants have been initiated by my Department within the past five years. The majority of recommendations have concerned good housekeeping and other no-cost/low-cost measures which have been, or are in the process of being, implemented where practicable.

Departmental Savings

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what mechanisms exist in his Department for identifying and tracking value-for-money savings in its operations.

Mr. Chris Patten: My Department has a range of consultancy, inspection and review mechanisms designed to improve financial and management performance. These include internal audit and staff inspection, and an extensive range of targets and performance measures. In addition, it conducts efficiency scrutinies as part of a programme co-ordinated by the efficiency unit, and has a policy of market testing to achieve operational savings.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the value-for-money savings in his Department's operations identified by internal audit and internal efficiency arrangements, by external audit and by management consultants retained by his Department between 1983-84 and 1988-89; and what is the amount of those savings fulfilled to date.

Mr. Chris Patten: Improvements resulting from audits, inspections and reviews are taken into account in the setting of annual budgets and performance targets. My Department estimates that it has achieved efficiency savings averaging in excess of 1·5 per cent. a year since 1984-85. The contribution of each of the review mechanisms to this overall saving is not separately recorded.

Langland Bay, Gower

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library the results of the investigations in September 1989 by the water research centre of health hazards associated with bathing in the polluted waters of Langland bay, Gower.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 22 May 1990]:* The water research centre report is expected soon.

Local Authority Officers

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what restrictions there are on local authority officers making statements which may have or be construed to have a political context in their capacity as lay preachers.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 22 May 1990]:* The Local Government Officers (Political Restrictions) Regulations 1990 are intended to uphold the tradition of political neutrality among senior local government officers. They accordingly place restrictions on their public political activity. A politically restricted officer who was a lay preacher would not be in breach of the regulations if he were to make statements referring to a political party, a person identified with a political party or promoting or opposing a point of view identified with a political party provided there was no apparent intention to affect public support for a political party.

Landfill

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has considered the value of a landfill tax to provide revenue for use in the promotion of recycling as an alternative to landfilling.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 23 May 1990]:* We are considering all effective means of encouraging waste recycling.

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will consider the introduction of a financial incentive to waste authorities which initiate landfill mining and reclamation through recycling.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 23 May 1990]:* Any financial incentives to waste authorities that initiate landfill mining and reclamation through recycling would be contemplated only after an in-depth study of the concept and in the light of any incentives which may or may not be afforded following the current joint DOE/DTI proposals on recycling.

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department will make a study into the technology available at the present time and in the immediate future to recycle the contents of landfill sites in England and Wales.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 23 May 1990]:* This subject is one of a number in connection with waste disposal and recycling currently under review by this Department's research and development group.

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department has made a study into the implications of landfill content in the event of the removal of *(a)* glass, *(b)* paper, *(c)* metals, and *(d)* other solids by source separation; what new regulations his Department will be considering to counter the increased problem of methane that may result; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 23 May 1990]:* This Department has not yet made a study of the implications of landfill content in the event of removal of glass, paper, metals and other solids by source separation. The removal of metals and glass would have minimal influence on the production of methane in landfill. Paper, however, degrades in landfill to produce methane and its removal would therefore diminish the overall gas potential.

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department will initiate a comprehensive study into the potential of landfill mining through recycling; and what incentives his Department intends to offer the development of such schemes.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 23 May 1990]:* This Department will initiate a study into the potential of landfill mining through recycling if it is considered to be a viable option by the Department's research and development group. The question of incentives would be considered subsequent to any decision made.

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department has made a study of the technology now available in the private sector to recycle the contents of landfill sites; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 23 May 1990]:* This Department has not made a specific study of the technology available in the private sector to recycle the contents of landfill sites.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy in respect of lining requirements for landfill sites; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 23 May 1990]:* Any decisions with regard to the lining of landfill sites are for operators in pursuit of obtaining a site operation licence or for operational reasons or for the waste disposal authority in respect of the issue of a site operation licence in consultation with the National Rivers Authority.

My Department has produced guidance documents—waste management paper 26, landfilling wastes and waste management paper 27: "The Control of Landfill Gas"—to provide assistance to site operators and licensing authorities in installing management systems and in setting licence conditions.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when officers of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution last met officials of East Sussex county council to discuss disposal of low-level radioactive waste; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 23 May 1990]:* Since the inception of HMIP in 1987 there have been no formal meetings between its officers and officials of East Sussex county council to discuss disposals of low-level radioactive waste.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those sites in east Sussex permitted to accept low-level radioactive waste, giving the maximum permitted quantity in each case, as determined by the radiochemical inspectorate branch of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 23 May 1990]:* Any waste disposal site licensed by a waste disposal authority under the Control of Pollution Act 1974 (COPA) may receive low-level radioactive waste where such a disposal method is authorised by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution (HMIP) under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960. Waste disposal authorities maintain registers of all disposal sites licensed under COPA in their areas.

The Department does not maintain a central record of quantities of low-level radioactive waste disposed of through local disposal routes. However, a condition of authorisation requires waste producers to keep proper and detailed records relating to their disposals. These records are subject to scrutiny by HMIP inspectors and in cases where a disposal requires special precautions to be taken, both HMIP and the local waste disposal authorities are notified by the operator of the nature and destination of individual consignments of radioactive waste due for disposal.

National Rivers Authority

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received regarding resources for the National Rivers Authority.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 24 May 1990]:* We are in discussion with the National Rivers Authority about resources and will be examining its future requirements in the context of considering the authority's first corporate plan.

Waste Recycling

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what methods other than source separation of waste would enable his Department to achieve its target of 50 per cent. domestic waste recycling by the year 2000.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 24 May 1990]:* The 50 per cent. recycling target can be achieved only by joint action by all those involved in recycling: first, by manufacturers using recycled materials and designing recyclability into their products, cutting down on the amount of unnecessary packaging and pricing recycled products competitively; secondly, by consumers knowing about and choosing recycled products and making use of recycling facilities provided by local authorities, retailers and voluntary groups; thirdly, by local authorities and retailers substantially increasing their commitment to providing recycling facilities so that the majority come up to the standard of the best; and, fourthly, by the Government setting the right waste management framework through legislation so that the real costs of alternative disposal methods are apparent and the benefits of recycling accrue to those who bring it about, co-operating with efforts to inform the public about the benefits of recycling, and bringing forward other measures such as encouraging public sector purchasing of recycled materials and promoting relevant research and monitoring studies.

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation giving equal status and support to authorities when looking at the options of *(a)* source separation and *(b)* mechanised separation.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 24 May 1990]:* The Government do not intend at present to legislate for or against any method of domestic waste separation.

Mr. Janman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has held talks with any other organisations or authorities in relation to funding, directly or indirectly, the creation of a source separation infrastructure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 24 May 1990]:* Ministers in the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of the Environment have received advice and information about domestic waste collection and sorting methods from a wide range of sources including the advisory group on recycling, interested local authorities, voluntary groups and trade associations, and have had discussions from time to time about a number of matters relating to recycling and waste management, including the possible means of funding and managing different waste separation systems.

Low-level Ozone

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he is taking to combat the rise in low-level ozone.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 24 May 1990]:* Low-level ozone is produced by the action of sunlight on oxides of nitrogen (NOx) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs). The Government are acting to reduce emissions of both classes of compound. The main sources of NOx in the United Kingdom are motor vehicles and power stations; the main sources of VOCs are motor vehicles, industrial processes and solvents. Tight new standards for new cars, which will come into effect by the end of 1992, will cut their emissions of both NOx and VOCs by at least 80 per cent. We are pressing the Commission for tight standards on NOx emissions from heavy diesels. We are committed by the EC large combustion plant directive to reducing NOx emissions from existing power stations and large industrial boilers by 15 per cent. by 1993 and 30 per cent. by 1998 against a 1980 baseline.

NOx and VOCs travel long distances and United Kingdom ozone episodes can be exacerbated by pollutants from abroad. It is therefore essential to tackle these problems internationally. The United Kingdom is strongly supporting Commission proposals for a directive requiring monitoring of ozone levels and is actively contributing to negotiations within the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe convention on long-range transboundary air pollution aimed at reducing VOC emissions from all sources.

Overhead Power Cables

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to acquaint himself with the results of studies into the possible links between overhead power lines and childhood cancers which have been carried out in Sweden and elsewhere; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 24 May 1990]:* The National Radiological Protection Board is under a statutory duty to advise Government and others on possible hazards to health from ionising and non-ionising radiation. The board is currently conducting a review of epidemiological studies on an international basis (including the one carried out in Sweden) on possible effects on human health from exposure to non-ionising electro-magnetic fields. The board expects to publish its advice later this year.

SCOTLAND

Earnings

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list, for the combined regions and islands areas of Highland, Borders, Dumfries and Galloway, Orkney, Shetland and the Western Isles *(a)* average earnings, *(b)* median earnings, *(c)* average hours including overtime and *(d)* overtime hours.

Mr. Lang: For the area in question the average gross earnings in April 1989 of all full-time employees on adult rates whose pay was not affected by absence was £209·8 per week. To obtain the precise figure of median earnings would involve disproportionate cost, but the figure for all full-time employees in the sample on adult rates lies in the range of £170 to £180. Average total weekly hours were 40·7 of which overtime was 2·9.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list, for the combined regions and islands areas of Highland, Borders, Dumfries and Galloway, Orkney, Shetland and Western Isles, the figures for female

part-time workers *(a)* average gross weekly earnings, *(b)* average weekly hours, *(c)* average gross hourly earnings, *(d)* median gross hourly earnings, *(e)* lowest decile of gross hourly earnings and *(f)* highest decile of gross hourly earnings (i) in total and (ii) broken down by the standard industrial classifications;

(2) if he will list, for the combined regions and islands areas of Highland, Borders, Dumfries and Galloway, Orkney, Shetland and the Western Isles, the distribution of gross hourly earnings for female part-time workers, giving the percentage of female part-time workers, with hourly earnings less than *(a)* £3·00, *(b)* 3·20, *(c)* £3·60, *(d)* £4·00 and *(e)* £4·20 (i) in total and (ii) broken down by the standard industrial classifications.

Mr. Lang: Because of the small samples in the areas concerned, reliable information for female part-time employees is not available.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list, for the combined regions and islands areas of Highland, Borders, Dumfries and Galloway, Orkney, Shetland and the Western Isles, the earnings of full-time workers on adult rates of pay broken down by *(a)* male manual, *(b)* male non-manual, *(c)* all males, *(d)* female manual, *(e)* female non-manual, *(f)* all females and *(g)* all workers.

Mr. Lang: The available information from the 1989 new earnings survey is as follows:

Average gross weekly earnings of full-time employees on adult rates, pay not affected by absence; April 1989

	£ per week
Manual males	205·1
Non-manual males	294·0
All males	239·1
Manual females	119·3
Non-manual females	172·7
All females	157·1
All employees	209·8

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list, for the combined regions and islands areas of Highland, Borders, Dumfries and Galloway, Orkney, Shetland and the Western Isles, the distribution of earnings for those earning under *(a)* £120, *(b)* £150, *(c)* £160, *(d)* the point below which 10 per cent. of earners fall and *(e)* the point which 10 per cent. of earners exceed, broken down by (i) male manual, (ii) male non-manual, (iii) all males, (iv) female manual, (v) female non-manual, (vi) all females and (vii) all workers, in total and by the standard industrial classifications;

(2) if he will list, for the combined regions and islands areas of Highland, Borders, Dumfries and Galloway, Orkney, Shetland and the Western Isles *(a)* average earnings, *(b)* median earnings, *(c)* average hours including overtime and *(d)* overtime hours, broken down by the standard industrial classifications into (i) males, (ii) females and (iii) all workers.

Mr. Lang: Only a limited amount of reliable information could be compiled in each case and the cost of doing so would be disproportionate.

Bankruptcy

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will show from each year since inception of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985 the number of persons made bankrupt in respect of cautionary obligation.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is not separately recorded.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland in how many sequestrations the Accountant of Bankruptcy accepted for payment accounts submitted to him by trustees in terms of section 53 of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985 containing hourly rates of remuneration in excess of £62·50 during the year ended 31 March.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is not separately recorded.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is *(a)* the maximum, *(b)* the minimum and *(c)* the average amount yet paid to a trustee for any one case of sequestration in terms of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In those cases where the final outcome is known the amounts paid to trustees from public funds, excluding refunded outlays, were as follows:

	£
(a) Maximum	17,866·38
(b) Minimum	258·25
(c) Average	2,889·00

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each year since inception the names of the 10 trustees who received the largest aggregate total sum for work carried out under the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985 and for each of the top 10 the sum received in each year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: For commercial reasons it would not be appropriate to provide details of the level of payments made to individual practitioners.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland in how many sequestrations the payment of fees from public funds to the trustee has exceeded the total debt of the bankrupt person; and in how many it has exceeded 50 per cent. thereof.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In those cases where the final outcome is known the fees paid to trustees have exceeded 50 per cent. of the total debt in 15 cases and of these in five cases the fees paid to the trustee exceeded the total debt.

Cleancare Ltd.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will review the contract of Cleancare Ltd. in the light of its employment of persons under 16 years.

Mr. Rifkind: All contracts for cleaning Scottish Office buildings are kept under continual review.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the Government properties Cleancare Ltd. has been contracted to clean.

Mr. Rifkind: The Scottish Office properties, which are all in Edinburgh, are New Register house; Pentland house; Saughton house; 16 Waterloo place; and the Ancient Monuments depot, Edinburgh castle.

West Register House (Files)

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will detail the steps his Department has taken to ensure that cleaners or other unauthorised people do not have access to personal files in West Register house and other Government offices.

Mr. Rifkind: The measures to protect official information are in accordance with standards laid down for application throughout Government Departments.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what personal information is held on files in West Register house.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: West Register house is a branch repository of the Scottish Record Office. Its main contents are the records of Government Departments, non-departmental public bodies, nationalised industries and courts in Scotland from the 17th century to the present day, many of which contain personal information.

Town and Country Planning

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those district councils which have made representations concerning the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Scotland) Order 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 147) of 27 March 1989.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The following district councils have made representations:

Angus district council
Clydebank district council
Eastwood district council

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration he has given to the effects on local amenities of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Scotland) Order 1989 (S.I., 1989, No. 147) of 27 March 1989.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The effects on local amenities of the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Scotland) Order 1989 were given careful consideration as part of the consultation process prior to the order coming into force. In response to the comments made on the consultation paper and to protect local amenities we removed public houses and other licensed premises from the food and drink class.

Wild Birds

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken to meet the United Kingdom's obligation to protect those areas of montane habitat which meet the criteria for designation under the Ramsar convention or the European Community directive of the conservation of wild birds; and if he will list those montane sites which have yet to be so designated.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: All the potential and possible sites which meet the criteria for designation under the Ramsar convention or the European Community directive for the conservation of wild birds have been identified by the Nature Conservancy Council and are listed in tables 3.1 and 3.2 of "Protecting internationally important bird sites." Scottish Development Department circular 1/88 advised local authorities to treat such sites as if they had already been designated in considering any planning application. A copy of the circular has been placed in the Library. All have been or will be notified as sites of special scientific interest. The Nature Conservancy Council prepares a detailed submission for each site in recommending that my right hon. and learned Friend should designate either as a special protection area under the wild birds directive or as a Ramsar site.

The montane sites which have been proposed but not yet designated as special protection areas are the Cairngorms, Caenlochan, Drumochter hills, North Harris mountains, Affric-Cannich hills and glens and the North Arran mountains.

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each year from 1978 the energy consumption, broken down by fuel, of the buildings occupied by his Department, expressing the figures in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* 1978-79 money terms and *(c)* units of consumption for electricity in kilowatt hours, gas in therms, liquid fuel in litres and solid fuel in tonnes.

Mr. Rifkind: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of dedicated energy managers in his Department and the number of person years devoted to energy management in the latest year.

Mr. Rifkind: A part-time energy manager has been appointed. A meaningful estimate of the number of person years cannot be made, but a large number of staff devote part of their time to energy management.

This information does not relate to the Scottish prison service and the minor Scottish Departments.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number of energy audits carried out in his Department in the last five years and for each audit a statement of its main conclusions.

Mr. Rifkind: Twenty-seven. The large number of recommendations made were mainly of a technical nature designed to improve energy efficiency.

This figure does not relate to the Scottish prison service and the minor Scottish Departments.

Departmental Savings

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the value-for-money savings in his Department's operations identified by internal audit and internal efficiency arrangements, and by external audit and by management consultants retained by his Department between 1983-84 and 1988-89; and what is the amount of those savings fulfilled to date.

Mr. Rifkind: The Departments for which I am responsible pursue value for money in all their activities.

The improvements which result from inquiries and studies of the type mentioned by the hon. Member are

taken into account in the setting of annual budgets and internal targets. Consistent figures for savings for the period 1983-84 to 1988-89 are not available as central records are not kept of the many improvements in efficiency which managers identify and implement.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what mechanisms exist in his Department for identifying and tracking value-for-money savings in its operations.

Mr. Rifkind: Individual units in all the Departments for which I am responsible are required to identify value-for-money savings as part of the management planning process. These plans are brought together each year in a departmental management plan which identifies the tasks facing the departments during the public expenditure survey period and the resources required to carry them out.

In addition, the Scottish Office efficiency unit maintains a continuous programme of reviews of individual areas which identifies savings. A recently formed purchasing and supply unit also has value for money as one of its main objectives.

In all cases, responsibility for actual delivery of savings identified lies with budget managers who have substantial delegated powers for running costs.

National Heritage Agency

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if Her Majesty's Government will introduce legislation to establish a natural heritage agency to redefine the remits of the Highlands and Islands Development Board, the Forestry Commission and the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland to pay closer regard to the sustainable use of natural resources.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 21 May 1990]:* We propose to bring forward legislation in due course to establish a natural heritage agency for Scotland. We intend to publish shortly a consultation paper inviting views on our proposals, including the remit of the new body and its relationship to other public bodies. I will arrange for the hon. Member to receive a copy.

Rivers

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on measures being undertaken by the river purification boards within Scotland to improve water quality.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 24 May 1990]:* The seven Scottish river purification boards, which are responsible for issuing consents for the discharge of trade and sewage effluent, setting appropriate conditions and reviewing these from time to time, carry out extensive monitoring of the waters for which they are responsible. Where necessary they refer cases of pollution to the procurator fiscal for consideration of prosecution. The boards may commission and undertake research and provide advice.

The river purification boards are required by statute to submit annual reports containing comprehensive details of their activities to my right hon. and learned Friend. Copies of these reports are placed in the Library of the House. In addition, officials of the Scottish Development Department maintain close liaison with officers of the boards regarding their work.

Bathing Waters

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has to improve water quality levels on Scottish designated bathing beaches.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 24 May 1990]:* Of the 23 identified bathing waters in Scotland, 16 met the standards for total and faecal coliforms set in the EC bathing waters directive in 1989. Where failure is caused by discharges from public sewers, it is for regional councils to plan and execute improvement works in line with the requirements of the river purification boards. Improvement schemes are included in the regional councils' capital expenditure programmes. Further measures will be necessary to implement the decision, announced to the House of Commons by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment on 5 March, *Official Report*, column *452*, that all significant discharges of sewage will require to receive treatment.

Agricultural Development Programme

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the latest administrative cost of the ADP scheme incurred by DAFS and the colleges of agriculture, respectively.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 24 May 1990]:* The administrative costs (including overheads) of the agricultural development programme incurred by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland to the end of March 1990 are estimated to be £1·103 million. There has been negligible expenditure on administration of ADP at the colleges, whose principal contribution is the provision of advisory services.

A74

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the estimated route rate of return currently anticipated from the upgrading of the A74 from existing dual carriageway to motorway.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 21 May 1990]:* Of the length of the A74 to be upgraded, three sections have so far been appraised in detail. The rate of return on these three sections together is estimated at approximately 14 per cent. in real terms, that is, 14 per cent. over and above the rate of inflation.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for South Shields of 21 May, *Official Report*, column *84*, (1) whether the cow aged 22 months came from a herd where cases of BSE had already been confirmed; whether this cow's mother had contracted BSE; and if he will make a statement;

(2) on what date BSE was confirmed in a cow aged 22 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: BSE was confirmed in the 22-month old cow on 28 November 1989. The disease had not been previously confirmed in the herd or its dam.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will list the published papers on scrapie produced by each member of *(a)* the Southwood and *(b)* Tyrrell agricultural committees;

(2) if he will list the published papers on bovine spongiform encephalopathy produced by each member of *(a)* the Southwood and *(b)* the Tyrrell committees.

Mr. Gummer: The members of the Southwood working party who were chosen to provide advice on bovine spongiform encephalopathy because of their eminence and experience in a variety of scientific fields under its chairman, Sir Richard Southwood, linacre professor of zoology at Oxford university, were Sir John, now Lord Walton, formerly professor of neurology at the university of Newcastle upon Tyne and a recent president of the General Medical Council and the Royal Society of Medicine; Professor M. A. Epstein, emeritus professor of pathology, university of Bristol; and veterinary microbiologist Dr. W. B. Martin, formerly director of the Moredun Research Institute in Edinburgh which undertook research into sheep diseases including scrapie.

The working party took evidence from various scientific experts, including Dr. R. H. Kimberlin, formerly director of the MRC/AFRC neuropathogenesis unit in Edinburgh. Dr. Kimberlin has conducted extensive research into scrapie and the other transmissible spongiform encephalopathies for nearly 30 years and has published more than 150 papers. He is a member of the new Tyrrell committee.

The Tyrrell committee's other members, under the chairmanship of Dr. D. A. Tyrrell of the Medical Research Council, who is a virologist with wide knowledge and experience of viruses affecting man, are, at present, Dr. R. G. Will, consultant neurologist at Western general hospital, Edinburgh, who has researched the epidemiology of Creutzfeldt Jakob disease; Dr. W. A. Watson, formerly director of the central veterinary laboratory and chairman of the Ministry's scrapie working party; and Professor F. Brown, an animal virologist who has served in an advisory capacity on a number of committees, including AFRC scrapie advisory committee.

It would be impractical to list in the *Official Report* all the papers published by these experts.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will list all the establishments which are *(a)* investigating and *(b)* have confirmed spongiform encephalopathy in cats or dogs;

(2) how many *(a)* cats and *(b)* dogs have been (i) confirmed and (ii) suspected of having spongiform encephalopathies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Since recent widespread publicity and MAFF recommendations to look out for spongiform encephalopathies, there is bound to have been an increased number of investigations. I understand that investigations are being, or have been, conducted on 22 cats at a number of Ministry veterinary investigation centres, a private laboratory, and the universities of Bristol and Liverpool. Disease has been confirmed in one cat in Great Britain and in one cat in Northern Ireland. There are no suspect cases in dogs. There is not yet any indication as to whether this condition has been long present in cats or not.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on what date the Southwood committee gave him specific advice that he should be particularly alert to the possible occurrence of encephalopathies in household pets.

Mr. Maclean: The report of the Southwood working party was received by the Government on 9 February 1989.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will make a statement on his policy towards the disposal of BSE carcases; and whether he intends to review this policy;

(2) if he has investigated the environmental, and animal and human health consequences of dumping BSE carcases on refuse sites.

Mr. Gummer: Carcases are disposed of either by incineration or burial, depending upon local circumstances and available facilities. Both are safe methods of carcase disposal and carried out in accordance with sound veterinary practice. Currently around two thirds are burnt and one third buried. However, the objective is to secure incineration facilities for all carcases.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the refuse sites which are being used to dump BSE carcases listing the county in which they are found.

Mr. Gummer: This information is not held centrally.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the total number of bovine spongiform encephalophathy cases that have been confirmed by county basis in the current year until the end of May.

Mr. Gummer: The information for Great Britain is as follows:

County	*Number*
Avon	104
Bedfordshire	11
Berkshire	17
Borders	6
Buckinghamshire	40
Cambridgeshire	23
Central	6
Cheshire	141
Cleveland	9
Clwyd	48
Cornwall	366
Cumbria	93
Derbyshire	72
Devon	507
Dorset	416
Dumfries	39
Durham	20
Dyfed	206
Essex	26
Fife	18
Mid Glamorgan	10
South Glamorgan	1
West Glamorgan	2
Gloucestershire	140
Grampian	45
Gwent	34
Gwynedd	11
Hampshire	205
Hereford and Worcester	101
Hertfordshire	30
Highland	11
Humberside	28
Isle of Wight	30
Kent	108
Lancashire	111
Leicestershire	129
Lincolnshire	40
London	3
Lothian	5
Manchester	5
Norfolk	79
Northamptonshire	33
Northumberland	15
Nottinghamshire	34
Orkney	3
Oxfordshire	95
Powys	52
Shropshire	118
Somerset	401
Staffordshire	103
Strathclyde	58
Suffolk	57
Surrey	57
East Sussex	65
West Sussex	118
Tayside	13
West Midlands	5
Warwickshire	69
Wiltshire	299
North Yorkshire	210
South Yorkshire	20
West Yorkshire	25
	5,146

Food Advisory Committee

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether it is his policy to circulate all written representations made to the Food Advisory Committee to the members of the committee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: All representations of significance are drawn to the attention of members of the committee and arrangements have been made for all written representations arising from the announcement of the committee agenda to be made available for members to see at each meeting.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list consumer organisations, manufacturers and individuals who have made representations to the Food Advisory Committee since 1 January 1988, giving their names and the month in which the representations were received.

Mr. Gummer: My Department receives a considerable number of representations on matters relating to the work of the Food Advisory Committee and they are brought to the committee's attention as appropriate. Those who have made written representations received by the committee secretariat as a direct result of the committee's own press releases announcing the agenda for its meetings, which were first issued in August 1988, are listed in the following table.

Committee Meeting	*Organisations/individuals*
15 September 1988	Beecham Products Co-operative Union Ltd. Dairy Crest Milk Marketing Board Local Authorities Co-ordinating Body on Trading Standards (LACOTS) Spice Trade Association
8 December 1988	Co-operative Union Ltd. LACOTS
25 May 1989	LACOTS
7 July 1989	The Food and Drink Federation National Office of Animal Health Ltd. Consumers' Association
8 September 1989	The University of Sussex
19 October 1989	Dairy Trade Federation
7 December 1989	National Farmers Union British Meat Manufacturers Association
9 March 1990	Milk Marketing Board
4 May 1990	LACOTS

Herbs and Spices

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consideration his Ministry has given to the steam pasteurisation process for herbs and spices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I understand that two commercial companies claim to have developed steam pasteurisation processes for reducing microbiological contamination of herbs and spices. It is too early to say, however, whether

either of these processes will provide a satisfactory replacement for chemical treatment in all circumstances. Neither process involves the sort of radically new technology which might warrant consideration by the Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes.

Hounds

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what regulations exist to control the meat fed to hounds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: There is no legislation which specifically controls meat fed to hounds. Hunt kennels may accept whole carcases, but they must not take unfit meat or specified bovine offal unless it has been sterilised. They may not of course receive carcases of animals suspected of having BSE, as these must be buried or incinerated.

Caseous Lymphadenitis

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the incidence of caseous lymphadenitis; and how many cases have been reported in the last six months in *(a)* goats and *(b)* humans.

Mr. Curry: Prior to 1990 caseous lymphadenitis had not been recorded in animals in the United Kingdom for many years. It has, however, been confirmed in three goat herds in England in the last six months all linked by the movement of stock to the same import consignment. There have been no reported cases of human infection in the United Kingdom in the same period.

The disease is found in a number of European countries and elsewhere in goats and sheep, but there are no accurate figures on the numbers of confirmed cases in animals throughout the world. Human infection has been reported on very rare occasions worldwide over a number of years, usually of an occupational disease as a result of close contact with infected animals.

Tobacco

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much tobacco was imported into the United Kingdom from other parts of the European Economic Community in the most recent annual period for which figures are available.

Mr. Curry: During 1989 a total of 11·977 tonnes of raw tobacco was imported into the United Kingdom from other parts of the European Economic Community.

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what price is received by tobacco manufacturers for production in the European Economic Community and what price is charged by the intervention boards for export of such tobacco to nations outside the European Economic Community.

Mr. Curry: There is no information available on the price received by tobacco manufacturers for products containing Community-grown tobacco. A wide range of prices is received by the intervention boards for tobacco sold out of intervention by tender. These prices depend on the tobacco varieties involved as well as on their quality. The following table shows the range of prices received for these tobacco varieties most frequently sold into intervention.

Variety	*1985 Harvest (Ecu/kg)*	*1986 Harvest (Ecu/kg)*	*1987 Harvest (Ecu/kg)*	[1][2] *Average price received for 1985, 1986 and 1987 Harvests*[4] *(Ecu/kg)*
Basmas	[3]0·60	0·45–0·61	0·31–0·37	0·47
Katerini	[3]0·27	0·14–0·59	[3]0·37	0·34
Bright	[3]0·09	0·41–0·66	0·24–0·41	0·41
Burley Gr	0·07–0·60	0·14–0·37	[3]0·37	0·16
Burley It	0·13–0·14	0·28–0·39	[3]0·28	0·22
Badischer Geudertheimer	[5]	0·42	[6]	0·42
Kaba Koulak Classic	0·16–0·26	0·14–0·20	[3]0·59	0·23
Forchheimer Havana	[3]0·09	0·16–0·66	0·28–0·41	0·31
Tsebelia	[5]	0·20–0·37	0·33–0·36	0·33
Mavra	[5]	0·14–0·16	0·31–0·41	0·23

[1] Prices converted from drachma/lire/to Ecus at market rates applying on the date the offer was accepted.
[2] Average prices weighted by volumes involved in tenders.
[3] Range not available since only one tender held.
[4] No tobacco from the 1988 harvest has been sold.
[5] No intervention stocks.
[6] No sales from this harvest of this variety.

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the number of energy audits carried out in his Department in the last five years and for each audit a statement of its main conclusions.

Mr. Curry: Informal assessments of energy usage and economy are a continuing process in the Department. In addition, two specific larger-scale energy audits have been carried out in the last five years; one was at the central veterinary laboratory, which is the Department's largest single user of energy. The consultants' report, in 1987, recommended some additional metering and controls and a range of housekeeping and staff energy awareness measures, but it drew attention to the poor thermal integrity of the buildings and concluded that the major expenditure required to improve this could not be justified on energy conservation grounds alone. The other audit was of four establishments in the Ministry's south-west region, where the consultants' report, in 1989, recommended the replacement of a boiler at one of the sites and a number of smaller measures, including the installation of energy-efficient lighting tubes, more pipe insulation and additional automatic heating controls.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the number of dedicated energy managers in his Department and the number of person years devoted to energy management in the latest year.

Mr. Curry: None, in the sense of full-time officials, although a departmental energy efficiency manager has been appointed who spends approximately half his time on this function. A substantial number of staff throughout the country are responsible for good energy management as part of their overall buildings management duties. The time spent is linked with other work and cannot be quantified separately.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give for each year from 1978 the energy consumption, broken down by fuel, of the buildings occupied by his Department, expressing the figures in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* 1978-79 money terms and *(c)* units of consumption for electricity in kilowatt hours, gas in therms, liquid fuel in litres and solid fuel in tonnes.

Mr. Curry: The information requested is not available for the period in question. As regards the 1989-90 financial year, I refer the hon. Member to the replies given to him on 30 April, *Official Report*, col. *458* and 10 May, *Official Report*, col. *226*.

EC Surplus Food

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he has any plans to extend the scope of the European Community surplus food scheme to all pensioners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: We have no plans to extend the EC surplus food scheme beyond its present scope. European legislation requires that the food made available be distributed only to the most deprived citizens of the Community. Not all pensioners can be described as "deprived"; but those who fall into one of the categories of person eligible under this scheme may, of course, receive produce. To extend the distribution to include all pensioners would spread the limited amounts of food available so thinly as to be of little benefit to anyone.

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many valid applications were received for each of the four categories of people who qualified for this year's European Community surplus food scheme; and what *(a)* quantity and *(b)* value of differing foodstuffs is being distributed into each of these categories.

Mr. Curry: Over 500 applications to participate in the 1990 EC surplus food scheme have been received from charitable and other non-profit-making organisations throughout the United Kingdom. These applications are currently being considered and I will make a statement once a decision has been reached. Approximately 3,800 tonnes of butter and 3,000 tonnes of beef are available for distribution this year. It is not possible to distinguish the amounts or value of produce by category as many of the organisations which have applied intend to distribute to more than one of the groups of people eligible under this scheme.

Departmental Savings

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what mechanisms exist in his Department for identifying and tracking value-for-money savings in its operations.

Mr. Curry: Apart from their normal responsibilities to seek value for money in their respective areas, line managers are involved with regular reviews and evaluations of Ministry policies, efficiency scrutinies and staff inspections, all of which contribute towards identifying improvements in value for money. The Ministry's planning and budgeting processes enable savings to be taken up.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what were the value-for-money savings in his Department's operations identified by internal audit and internal efficiency arrangements, and by external audit and by management consultants retained by his Department between 1983-84 and 1988-89; and what is the amount of those savings fulfilled to date.

Mr. Curry: Under the principles of the financial management initiative responsibility for achieving value for money is largely the responsibility of line managers, and there is no central record of savings achieved over the period 1983-84 to 1988-89.

Poultry Meat

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much poultry meat is imported into the United Kingdom from Spain.

Mr. Gummer: The United Kingdom imported 1,124 tonnes of poultry meat from Spain in 1989 and a further 480 tonnes in the first four months of this year.

Sewage Sludge Disposal

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent information he has received with regard to marine mammal problems caused by industrial and radioactive contaminants.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: A series of studies are under way or planned on contaminant levels in marine mammals, and I hope to announce shortly new studies on strandings and contaminant levels in small cetaceans (dolphins and porpoises). From the studies reported so far, including those carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the sea mammal research unit of the Natural Environment Research Council, it appears that pollutant levels in seals are at the lower end of the reported range for the North and Baltic seas and no deleterious effects have been observed which can be directly attributed to pollution.

Further studies commissioned by my Department have been designed to examine the relationship between contaminant burdens in seals and their feeding sites by studying a group of breeding female grey seals over a number of years. Breeding performance is also being monitored and preliminary results are expected soon.

In addition, the sea mammal research unit, together with the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, has recently carried out a study of the level of radionuclides in grey

seals. The full report is to be published shortly but preliminary results show that levels of radionuclides were generally low and often below detection limits and that there were no differences between samples taken from seals in the North sea and north-east Atlantic.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Lecturers' Earnings

Mr. Peter Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the real increase in the average earnings of *(a)* polytechnic lecturers and *(b)* university lecturers over the period April 1980 to April 1990; and what were the cash figures in each case.

Mr. Jackson: The real increase in the average earnings of *(a)* polytechnic lecturers and *(b)* university lecturers over the period 1 April 1980 to 1 April 1990 is set out in the table. The choice of dates colours the picture: if the period to 1 May 1990 is considered the university lecturers' real-terms increase is 8·7 per cent.

	Percentage increase	*Cash increase*[5] £
University lecturers[1]	0·3	9,688[3]
Polytechnic lecturers[2]	6·1	10,293

[1] Based on maximum of university lecturer scale, excluding discretionary points.
[2] Based on maximum of polytechnic senior lecturer scale, from 1 April 1989. Prior to that date, based on maximum of Further Education senior lecturer scale.
[3] Excludes settlement agreed between employers and Association of University Teachers effective from 1 May 1990. This would provide a real increase of 8·7 per cent. (£11,530 in cash) over the period 1 April 1980—1 May 1990, assuming the annual rate of inflation remains unchanged from the April level of 9·4 per cent.
[4] The latest polytechnic lecturers pay settlement covered the period 1 April 1989—31 August 1990.
[5] The figures given exclude non salary earnings.

Student Accommodation, London

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the average cost of rented accommodation for university students studying in central London for whom in-college accommodation is not available.

Mr. Jackson: Information on the rents paid by students is not collected in the form requested. However, a survey of student income and expenditure conducted by Research Services Ltd in the 1988-89 academic year contains some information about accommodation costs faced by students living in London. A copy of the survey report is in the Library.

Teacher Training

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will provide details of (i) the total expenditure of INSET by each local education authority, (ii) the average expenditure per teacher for INSET by each local education authority, (iii) the national average expenditure per teacher for INSET, and (iv) the total number of teachers in each local education authority who attended INSET within both the primary and secondary sector for the year 1989-90, or the year for which most recent figures are available.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The latest available information for the year 1989-90 is set out in the table. It refers to estimated total expenditure, from all sources, for INSET for school teachers. My right hon. Friend expects all school teachers to have received some INSET during the five non-contact days provided for in teachers' conditions of service.

LEA	*Total Expenditure*[1] £	*Average Expenditure per teacher*[1] £
Barking	598,000	431·89
Barnet	1,675,000	643·61
Bexley	869,000	479·58
Brent	1,463,000	548·82
Bromley	1,294,000	631·28
Croydon	1,815,347	697·67
Ealing	765,000	317·55
Enfield	2,374,220	1,028·16
Haringey	974,200	513·79
Harrow	1,169,000	772·74
Havering	1,153,000	531·36
Hillingdon	1,058,000	566·59
Hounslow	1,328,400	681·55
Kingston Upon Thames	1,038,255	955·24
Merton	1,146,000	866·02
Newham	676,800	291·28
Redbridge	1,296,800	756·81
Richmond Upon Thames	931,050	950·63
Sutton	960,090	738·02
Waltham Forest	1,602,000	679·16
Birmingham	6,234,201	623·16
Coventry	1,338,700	446·71
Dudley	2,460,000	888·47
Sandwell	1,575,400	530·47
Solihull	1,275,560	662·94
Walsall	1,115,500	378·37
Wolverhampton	1,105,200	409·03
Knowsley	664,900	375·16
Liverpool	1,752,000	355·35
St. Helens	1,280,784	683·12
Sefton	1,263,900	512·51
Wirral	1,854,200	605·63
Bolton	1,304,712	497·28
Bury	1,325,250	855·88
Manchester	1,787,954	376·36
Oldham	1,201,970	514·87
Rochdale	1,720,977	754·55
Salford	1,490,810	678·23
Stockport	1,037,209	404·72
Tameside	1,638,172	847·61
Trafford	746,912	423·11
Wigan	1,598,638	471·31
Barnsley	1,605,000	782·20
Doncaster	2,050,209	711·11
Rotherham	1,717,771	669·15
Sheffield	2,739,000	580·60
Bradford	4,456,000	845·46
Calderdale	1,589,420	850·46
Kirklees	2,827,985	750·95
Leeds	3,428,000	504·13
Wakefield	1,832,408	622·10
Gateshead	1,026,200	540·76
Newcastle Upon Tyne	1,300,376	493·45
North Tyneside	965,226	453·16
South Tyneside	1,128,900	776·94
Sunderland	1,697,500	585·12
Isles of Scilly	12,000	442·80
Inner London	12,650,000	595·85
Avon	3,564,685	479·69
Bedfordshire	2,124,300	434·04
Berkshire	3,247,500	537·38
Buckinghamshire	4,373,000	848·17
Cambridgeshire	3,776,682	717·07
Cheshire	4,510,220	528·70
Cleveland	2,964,000	515·97
Cornwall	3,141,948	835·05

LEA	Total Expenditure[1] £	Average Expenditure per teacher[1] £
Cumbria	2,477,796	555·78
Derbyshire	6,586,200	762·24
Devon	3,223,811	439·41
Dorset	3,200,435	691·64
Durham	2,457,000	484·90
East Sussex	2,518,900	544·13
Essex	5,730,000	468·91
Gloucestershire	3,418,100	777·42
Hampshire	5,000,000	413·86
Hereford and Worcester	3,089,300	564·84
Hertfordshire	4,664,000	511·48
Humberside	3,607,667	446·44
Isle of Wight	1,011,500	1,006·37
Kent	5,670,200	466·13
Lancashire	5,863,000	477·58
Leicestershire	5,983,000	761·70
Lincolnshire	2,520,233	535·87
Norfolk	3,799,000	675·76
North Yorkshire	3,494,000	616·57
Northamptonshire	3,861,036	714·05
Northumberland	1,551,263	552·52
Nottinghamshire	7,665,460	847·68
Oxfordshire	3,429,360	810·17
Shropshire	2,973,000	811·47
Somerset	1,904,610	549·75
Staffordshire	5,521,950	615·35
Suffolk	3,130,000	623·44
Surrey	4,504,020	624·15
Warwickshire	2,631,721	617·28
West Sussex	3,524,000	710·40
Wiltshire	3,164,222	706·33
England Total	246,863,225	594·78

[1] 1989-90 (estimated).

Training Grants

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list for each local authority (i) the proposed bid made for the local education authorities training grants scheme, (ii) the indicative maxima, (iii) the actual grant allocated and (iv) the national average level of grant allocated for both national and local priority expenditure on the primary sector for the year 1990-91.

Mrs. Rumbold: In most of the areas of training which DES circular 20/89 specified as national priority areas for 1990-91, and in the local priority area for the same year, allocations of the amounts of expenditure eligible for support were made on the basis of mathematical formulae reflecting the size of the relevant pupil or student population. For training of articled teachers, allocations were determined through a process of negotiation with those consortia of authorities which had expressed an interest in participating in the scheme. Initial bids for the remaining areas are shown in table A.

The indicative maxima for 1990-91 are shown in table B. Final maxima, as notified to authorities in December 1989 or March 1990, are shown in table C. This includes all areas of the scheme except training of educational psychologists, where maxima are yet to be determined.

It is for individual local education authorities to determine what proportion of their allocations should be spent on the primary sector, since they are best placed to identify the particular patterns of training needs in their own areas. In 1990-91, however, there are three national priority areas specifically directed towards training in the primary sector. These areas provide support for a total of almost £11·7 million of expenditure, allocated on a per capita basis.

Table A: LEATGS Bids, 1990-91

(£000s)

Local Education Authority	NPA5 SEN: Hearing	NPA6 SEN: Sight	NPA7 SEN: SLD
Barking and Dagenham	—	—	—
Barnet	22	22	22
Bexley	23	18	29
Brent	12	12	12
Bromely	13	9	9
Croydon	21	14	14
Ealing	5	—	5
Enfield	—	—	—
Haringey	23	—	23
Harrow	21	7	14
Havering	14	—	21
Hillingdon	10	13	18
Hounslow	20	8	—
Kingston upon Thames	—	7	12
Merton	—	—	21
Newham	35	7	21
Redbridge	3	—	22
Richmond upon Thames	—	—	27
Sutton	—	—	21
Waltham Forest	10	49	39
Camden	32	10	17
City of London	—	—	—
Greenwich	15	—	45
Hackney	16	16	6
Hammersmith and Fulham	20	20	12
Islington	20	20	40
Kensington and Chelsea	20	20	—
Lambeth	40	25	12
Lewisham	30	30	30
Southwark	2	1	1
Tower Hamlets	18	14	—
Wandsworth	—	—	—
Westminster	6	—	45
Birmingham	79	86	65
Coventry	7	—	18
Dudley	7	15	22
Sandwell	28	14	42
Solihull	13	4	19
Walsall	15	15	15
Wolverhampton	—	13	1
Knowsley	—	—	33
Liverpool	9	13	47
St. Helens	12	—	12
Sefton	29	—	10
Wirral	24	—	12
Bolton	7	15	19
Bury	7	—	19
Manchester	36	36	72
Oldham	30	14	30
Rochdale	18	18	18
Salford	—	—	—
Stockport	—	—	6
Tameside	10	2	16
Trafford	24	10	41
Wigan	18	12	12
Barnsley	7	—	8
Doncaster	30	—	36
Rotherham	21	4	15
Sheffield	56	22	56
Bradford	32	59	46
Calderdale	20	20	20
Kirklees	32	20	12
Leeds	54	33	29
Wakefield	4	11	19

Local Education Authority	NPA5 SEN: Hearing	NPA6 SEN: Sight	NPA7 SEN: SLD
Gateshead	14	6	60
Newcastle	50	6	40
North Tyneside	20	20	12
South Tyneside	22	—	—
Sunderland	—	23	20
Isles of Scilly	—	—	—
Avon	29	29	59
Bedfordshire	9	19	32
Berkshire	53	7	18
Buckinghamshire	7	3	25
Cambridgeshire	29	15	37
Cheshire	46	39	46
Cleveland	14	23	86
Cornwall	6	—	20
Cumbria	60	10	10
Derbyshire	66	28	73
Devon	25	—	27
Dorset	23	23	23
Durham	27	20	53
East Sussex	62	17	33
Essex	100	21	260
Gloucestershire	21	21	85
Hampshire	30	34	45
Hereford and Worcester	45	63	46
Hertfordshire	25	7	43
Humberside	45	12	39
Isle of Wight	17	16	27
Kent	62	62	63
Lancashire	24	9	95
Leicestershire	17	23	57
Lincolnshire	10	25	30
Norfolk	17	20	85
North Yorkshire	37	19	33
Northamptonshire	21	8	11
Northumberland	8	—	42
Nottinghamshire	20	15	26
Oxfordshire	27	12	27
Shropshire	21	14	47
Somerset	—	31	56
Staffordshire	35	16	42
Suffolk	46	2	31
Surrey	15	4	34
Warwickshire	36	72	54
West Sussex	5	18	22
Wiltshire	—	7	75
Total England	2,336	1,577	3,357

Note:—The abbreviation "NPA" stands for "national priority area"; "SEN" stands for "special educational needs"; and "SLD" stands for "severe learning difficulties".

Local Education Authority	NPA 20 Educational Psychologists	Training of Licensed Teachers
Barking and Dagenham	2,300	—
Barnet	25,000	50,000
Bexley	3,000	37,100
Brent	19,200	—
Bromley	24,000	15,000
Croydon	46,938	—
Ealing	15,000	54,000
Enfield	13,500	53,000
Haringey	28,327	80,000
Harrow	—	57,400
Havering	23,000	53,000
Hillingdon	30,000	73,212
Hounslow	7,200	38,000
Kingston upon Thames	7,000	26,000
Merton	27,907	30,000
Newham	29,500	114,000
Redbridge	41,127	17,500
Richmond upon Thames	—	10,000
Sutton	—	47,600
Waltham Forest	76,000	64,500
Camden	21,450	—
City of London	—	—
Greenwich	15,750	12,840
Hackney	18,000	63,400
Hammersmith and Fulham	21,684	17,000
Islington	—	203,150
Kensington and Chelsea	—	30,000
Lambeth	31,867	—
Lewisham	n/a	—
Southwark	31,580	—
Tower Hamlets	23,500	38,330
Wandsworth	20,000	31,479
Westminster	—	8,000
Birmingham	47,000	—
Coventry	—	31,800
Dudley	28,000	58,625
Sandwell	36,000	48,250
Solihull	—	—
Walsall	300	—
Wolverhampton	21,650	—
Knowsley	26,200	—
Liverpool	37,000	—
St. Helens	—	—
Sefton	36,000	—
Wirral	30,000	—
Bolton	n/a	5,000
Bury	—	—
Manchester	30,000	—
Oldham	6,500	—
Rochdale	12,000	—
Salford	n/a	—
Stockport	5,000	1,000
Tameside	—	—
Trafford	—	—
Wigan	—	—
Barnsley	—	—
Doncaster	—	—
Rotherham	5,670	—
Sheffield	7,500	—
Bradford	35,000	—
Calderdale	n/a	—
Kirklees	12,000	—
Leeds	27,000	—
Wakefield	—	—
Gateshead	—	—
Newcastle	15,000	—
North Tyneside	21,000	—
South Tyneside	—	—
Sunderland	28,000	—
Isles of Scilly	—	—
Avon	37,750	—
Bedfordshire	26,382	60,000
Berkshire	24,000	30,000
Buckinghamshire	25,000	137,000
Cambridgeshire	36,000	27,360
Cheshire	52,000	—
Cleveland	30,000	—
Cornwall	14,000	—
Cumbria	—	—
Derbyshire	39,583	72,000
Devon	21,228	24,500
Dorset	30,000	20,000
Durham	30,000	—
East Sussex	n/a	—
Essex	68,000	324,000
Gloucestershire	56,000	30,330
Hampshire	155,150	—

Local Education Authority	NPA 20 Educational Psychologists	Training of Licensed Teachers
Hereford and Worcester	52,000	10,000
Hertfordshire	—	200,000
Humberside	26,000	—
Isle of Wight	—	—
Kent	52,725	171,350
Lancashire	n/a	50,000
Leicestershire	n/a	—
Lincolnshire	—	40,600
Norfolk	35,670	—
North Yorkshire	25,400	—
Northamptonshire	15,800	197,460
Northumberland	31,330	—
Nottinghamshire	28,900	62,032
Oxfordshire	n/a	10,950
Shropshire	25,400	—
Somerset	20,000	38,000
Staffordshire	50,000	—
Suffolk	26,000	—
Surrey	49,000	55,000
Warkwickshire	20,000	—
West Sussex	49,000	10,000
Wiltshire	16,500	38,300
TOTAL ENGLAND	n/a	2,946,268

Note: Where bids for licensed teachers were costed on a school year basis, the figures have been adjusted in line with the 1990-91 financial year.

Table B LEATGs Indicative Maxima

Indicative Maxima 1990-91: National Priority Areas for Schools	1 Management £,000	2 Appraisal £,000	3a Basic Curriculum £,000	3b Primary Maths £,000	3c Primary Science £,000
Barking and Dagenham	26	49	168	18	18
Barnet	45	85	290	28	28
Bexley	37	70	237	22	22
Brent	37	70	237	27	27
Bromley	42	78	267	26	26
Croydon	49	92	314	33	33
Ealing	42	79	267	32	32
Enfield	44	82	279	28	28
Haringey	29	54	183	21	21
Harrow	30	56	189	23	23
Havering	42	78	267	25	25
Hillingdon	35	66	224	22	22
Hounslow	34	64	218	22	22
Kingston upon Thames	19	36	122	12	12
Merton	23	43	147	11	11
Newham	38	72	243	25	25
Redbridge	35	66	223	22	22
Richmond upon Thames	18	34	116	12	12
Sutton	25	48	162	14	14
Waltham Forest	34	64	217	22	22
Camden	23	42	143	12	12
City of London	1	1	15	1	1
Greenwich	38	71	241	24	24
Hackney	26	48	164	19	19
Hammersmith and Fulham	17	33	111	11	11
Islington	23	43	147	17	17
Kensington and Chelsea	12	22	73	8	8
Lambeth	28	53	180	23	23
Lewisham	34	64	216	23	23
Southwark	32	60	204	23	23
Tower Hamlets	31	57	194	21	21
Wandsworth	30	57	194	20	20
Westminster	18	34	117	12	12
Birmingham	194	364	1,238	131	131
Coventry	55	103	350	36	36
Dudely	52	98	332	35	35
Sandwell	55	103	350	35	35
Solihull	38	72	243	23	23
Walsall	52	97	330	31	31
Wolverhampton	45	85	289	29	29
Knowsley	30	57	194	21	21
Liverpool	87	163	554	57	57
St Helens	35	66	224	22	22
Sefton	52	97	331	32	32
Wirral	59	111	378	38	38
Bolton	50	94	321	32	32
Bury	30	56	192	20	20
Manchester	78	147	499	54	54
Oldham	44	82	279	29	29
Rochdale	40	76	257	25	25

Indicative Maxima 1990-91: National Priority Areas for Schools	*1 Management* £,000	*2 Appraisal* £,000	*3a Basic Curriculum* £,000	*3b Primary Maths* £,000	*3c Primary Science* £,000
Salford	42	79	268	28	28
Stockport	51	95	322	32	32
Tameside	40	75	257	26	26
Trafford	33	62	211	22	22
Barnsley	39	73	249	24	24
Doncaster	55	102	347	33	33
Rotherham	49	91	309	29	29
Sheffield	81	152	517	53	53
Bradford	92	172	585	47	47
Calderdale	37	69	234	24	24
Kirklees	70	132	447	42	42
Leeds	120	225	764	63	63
Wakefield	54	102	347	32	32
Gateshead	34	64	218	22	22
Newcastle upon Tyne	44	83	283	27	27
North Tyneside	34	64	217	19	19
South Tyneside	27	51	172	18	18
Sunderland	57	106	362	37	37
Isles of Scilly	1	1	17	1	1
Avon	153	287	977	100	100
Bedfordshire	95	179	607	50	50
Berkshire	122	229	779	76	76
Buckinghamshire	109	205	697	78	78
Cambridgeshire	113	211	718	73	73
Cheshire	177	331	1,126	111	111
Cleveland	110	206	700	69	69
Cornwall	78	147	498	48	48
Cumbria	86	161	547	53	53
Derbyshire	160	300	1,019	100	100
Devon	153	288	978	97	97
Dorset	93	175	594	52	52
Durham	106	199	677	68	68
East Sussex	93	174	592	58	58
Essex	266	498	1,692	163	163
Gloucestershire	88	166	564	55	55
Hampshire	249	466	1,585	165	165
Hereford and Worcester	113	212	719	61	61
Hertfordshire	170	319	1,083	101	101
Humberside	159	298	1,011	94	94
Isle of Wight	20	37	126	9	9
Kent	258	483	1,643	153	153
Lancashire	246	461	1,567	159	159
Leicestershire	160	300	1,020	99	99
Lincolnshire	98	184	624	61	61
Norfolk	120	225	763	79	79
North Yorkshire	115	215	732	70	70
Northamptonshire	109	205	696	64	64
Northumberland	56	104	354	26	26
Nottinghamshire	168	315	1,072	100	100
Oxfordshire	85	159	541	50	50
Shropshire	72	134	457	42	42
Somerset	74	139	474	45	45
Staffordshire	185	347	1,178	110	110
Suffolk	105	196	668	55	55
Surrey	142	266	904	99	99
Warwickshire	84	157	533	59	59
West Sussex	107	200	681	67	67
Wiltshire	93	173	589	58	58
TOTALS	7,941	15,089	50,621	4,963	4,963

Indicative maxima 1990-91: National Priority Areas 4, 8, 9, 11 (Schools) and 12 (FE)	*4 Under "rising fives" £,000*	*8 Special Needs: Designated Teachers £,000*	*9 New Technologies £,000*	*11 Management of Pupil's Behaviour £,000*	*12 Management (FE) £,000*
Barking and Dagenham	5	5	20	6	10
Barnet	9	6	34	10	21
Bexley	7	5	28	8	10
Brent	8	5	28	8	21
Bromley	8	5	31	9	13
Croydon	10	6	37	10	20
Ealing	9	5	31	9	12
Enfield	8	5	33	9	17
Haringey	6	5	22	6	15
Harrow	6	5	22	6	31
Havering	8	5	31	9	9
Hillingdon	7	5	26	7	8
Hounslow	7	5	26	7	11
Kingston upon Thames	5	5	14	5	13
Merton	5	5	17	5	9
Newham	8	5	29	8	21
Redbridge	7	5	26	7	7
Richmond upon Thames	5	5	14	5	15
Sutton	5	5	19	5	11
Waltham Forest	7	5	26	7	12
Camden	5	5	17	5	10
City of London	1	1	1	1	5
Greenwich	8	5	28	8	6
Hackney	6	5	19	5	13
Hammersmith and Fulham	5	5	13	5	18
Islington	5	5	17	5	18
Kensington and Chelsea	5	5	9	5	0
Lambeth	7	5	21	6	19
Lewisham	7	5	25	7	15
Southwark	7	5	24	7	11
Tower Hamlets	6	5	23	6	0
Wandsworth	6	5	23	6	11
Westminster	5	5	14	5	25
Birmingham	38	22	146	41	66
Coventry	11	7	41	12	26
Dudley	10	6	39	11	34
Sandwell	11	7	41	12	25
Solihull	7	5	29	8	17
Walsall	10	6	39	11	15
Wolverhampton	9	6	34	10	21
Knowsley	6	5	23	6	11
Liverpool	17	10	65	18	39
St. Helens	7	5	26	7	22
Sefton	10	6	39	11	20
Wirral	12	7	45	13	27
Bolton	10	6	38	11	21
Bury	6	5	23	6	13
Manchester	15	9	59	17	56
Oldham	9	5	33	9	12
Rochdale	8	5	30	9	11
Salford	8	5	31	9	5
Stockport	10	6	38	11	22
Tameside	8	5	30	9	18
Trafford	7	5	25	7	18
Barnsley	8	5	29	8	12
Doncaster	11	7	41	12	24
Rotherham	9	6	36	10	19
Sheffield	16	10	61	17	38
Bradford	19	11	69	19	40
Calderdale	7	5	28	8	12
Kirklees	14	8	53	15	29
Leeds	23	14	90	25	41
Wakefield	11	7	41	12	20
Gateshead	7	5	26	7	8
Newcastle upon Tyne	9	6	33	9	20
North Tyneside	7	5	25	7	16

Indicative maxima 1990-91: National Priority Areas 4, 8, 9, 11 (Schools) and 12 (FE)	*4 Under "rising fives" £,000*	*8 Special Needs: Designated Teachers £,000*	*9 New Technologies £,000*	*11 Management of Pupil's Behaviour £,000*	*12 Management (FE) £,000*
South Tyneside	5	5	20	6	18
Sunderland	11	7	43	12	16
Isles of Scilly	1	1	1	1	1
Avon	30	18	115	32	61
Bedfordshire	20	11	71	20	40
Berkshire	25	14	92	26	64
Buckinghamshire	23	13	82	23	23
Cambridgeshire	23	13	84	24	35
Cheshire	34	20	132	37	70
Cleveland	22	13	82	23	37
Cornwall	15	9	59	17	23
Cumbria	16	10	64	18	29
Derbyshire	32	19	120	34	51
Devon	31	18	115	32	73
Dorset	18	11	70	20	34
Durham	21	13	80	22	40
East Sussex	19	11	70	20	43
Essex	52	31	199	56	71
Gloucestershire	17	10	66	19	41
Hampshire	50	29	186	52	109
Hereford and Worcester	23	13	85	24	49
Hertfordshire	33	20	127	36	82
Humberside	30	18	119	34	46
Isle of Wight	5	5	15	5	10
Kent	58	30	193	54	76
Lancashire	48	28	184	52	128
Leicestershire	32	19	120	34	47
Lincolnshire	19	12	73	21	34
Norfolk	24	14	90	25	45
North Yorkshire	22	13	86	24	47
Northamptonshire	21	13	82	23	26
Northumberland	11	7	42	12	12
Nottinghamshire	34	20	126	36	81
Oxfordshire	18	10	64	18	43
Shropshire	14	9	54	15	30
Somerset	15	9	56	16	39
Staffordshire	36	21	139	39	65
Suffolk	21	12	79	22	37
Surrey	28	17	106	30	53
Warwickshire	16	10	63	18	42
West Sussex	22	13	80	23	35
Wiltshire	19	11	69	20	53
Totals	1,589	993	5,955	1,687	3,171

Indicative Maxima 1990-91: National Priority Areas for FE	*13 Subject competence £,000*	*14 IT £,000*	*15 Special educational needs £,000*	*16 Multi-ethnic society £,000*	*17 Competence assessment £,000*
Barking and Dagenham	6	5	5	5	6
Barnet	13	6	6	6	13
Bexley	6	5	5	5	6
Brent	13	6	6	6	13
Bromley	8	5	5	5	8
Croydon	12	6	5	5	12
Ealing	8	5	5	5	8
Enfield	11	5	5	5	11
Haringey	9	5	5	5	9
Harrow	19	9	8	8	19
Havering	6	5	5	5	6
Hillingdon	5	5	5	5	5
Hounslow	7	5	5	5	7
Kingston upon Thames	8	5	5	5	8
Merton	6	5	5	5	6
Newham	13	7	6	6	13
Redbridge	5	5	5	5	5
Richmond upon Thames	9	5	5	5	9
Sutton	7	5	5	5	7
Waltham Forest	8	5	5	5	8

Indicative Maxima 1990-91: National Priority Areas for FE	*13 Subject competence* £,000	*14 IT* £,000	*15 Special educational needs* £,000	*16 Multi-ethnic society* £,000	*17 Competence assessment* £,000
Camden	6	5	5	5	6
City of London	5	5	5	5	5
Greenwich	5	5	5	5	5
Hackney	8	5	5	5	8
Hammersmith and Fulham	11	5	5	5	11
Islington	10	5	5	5	10
Kensington and Chelsea	0	0	0	0	0
Lambeth	12	6	5	5	12
Lewisham	9	5	5	5	9
Southwark	7	5	5	5	7
Tower Hamlets	0	0	0	0	0
Wandsworth	7	5	5	5	7
Westminster	16	8	7	7	16
Birmingham	41	19	16	16	41
Coventry	16	8	7	7	16
Dudley	21	10	9	9	21
Sandwell	16	8	7	7	16
Solihull	11	5	5	5	11
Walsall	9	5	5	5	9
Wolverhampton	13	6	6	6	13
Knowsley	7	5	5	5	7
Liverpool	24	11	10	10	24
St. Helens	14	7	6	6	14
Sefton	12	6	5	5	12
Wirral	17	8	7	7	17
Bolton	13	6	6	6	13
Bury	8	5	5	5	8
Manchester	35	16	14	14	35
Oldham	8	5	5	5	8
Rochdale	7	5	5	5	7
Salford	5	5	5	5	5
Stockport	13	7	6	6	13
Tameside	11	5	5	5	11
Trafford	11	6	5	5	11
Barnsley	7	5	5	5	7
Doncaster	15	7	7	7	15
Rotherham	12	6	5	5	12
Sheffield	24	11	10	10	24
Bradford	25	12	10	10	25
Calderdale	7	5	[illegible]	5	7
Kirklees	18	9	[illegible]	8	18
Leeds	25	12	11	11	25
Wakefield	13	6	6	6	13
Gateshead	5	5	5	5	5
Newcastle upon Tyne	13	6	6	6	13
North Tyneside	10	5	5	5	10
South Tyneside	11	6	5	5	11
Sunderland	10	5	5	5	10
Isles of Scilly	1	1	1	1	1
Avon	38	18	15	15	38
Bedfordshire	25	12	10	10	25
Berkshire	40	18	16	16	40
Buckinghamshire	14	7	6	6	14
Cambridgeshire	22	10	9	9	22
Cheshire	44	20	18	18	44
Cleveland	23	11	10	10	23
Cornwall	14	7	6	6	14
Cumbria	18	9	8	8	18
Derbyshire	32	15	13	13	32
Devon	46	21	18	18	46
Dorset	21	10	9	9	21
Durham	25	12	10	10	25
East Sussex	27	13	11	11	27
Essex	44	21	18	18	44
Gloucestershire	26	12	11	11	26
Hampshire	68	31	27	27	68

Indicative Maxima 1990-91: National Priority Areas for FE	*13 Subject competence* £,000	*14 IT* £,000	*15 Special educational needs* £,000	*16 Multi-ethnic society* £,000	*17 Competence assessment* £,000
Hereford and Worcester	31	14	13	13	31
Hertfordshire	51	24	20	20	51
Humberside	29	13	12	12	29
Isle of Wight	6	5	5	5	6
Kent	47	22	19	19	47
Lancashire	80	37	31	31	80
Leicestershire	29	14	12	12	29
Lincolnshire	21	10	9	9	21
Norfolk	28	13	11	11	28
North Yorkshire	29	14	12	12	29
Northamptonshire	16	8	7	7	16
Northumberland	7	5	5	5	7
Nottinghamshire	51	23	20	20	51
Oxfordshire	27	13	11	11	27
Shropshire	19	9	8	8	19
Somerset	24	12	10	10	24
Staffordshire	41	19	16	16	41
Suffolk	23	11	10	10	23
Surrey	33	15	13	13	33
Warwickshire	26	12	11	11	26
West Sussex	22	10	9	9	22
Wiltshire	33	15	13	13	33
Totals	1,982	991	892	892	1,982

Indicative Maxima 1990-91: National Priority Areas and Local Priorities	*18 Health Education* £,000	*19 Youth and Community Workers* £,000	*21 Adult Literacy* £,000	*Local priorities* £,000	*Totals* £,000
Barking and Dagenham	10	5	3	302	672
Barnet	17	7	3	531	1,158
Bexley	14	5	1	418	911
Brent	14	6	4	444	980
Bromley	15	6	2	473	1,032
Croydon	18	7	5	568	1,243
Ealing	15	6	3	474	1,047
Enfield	16	7	2	505	1,100
Haringey	11	5	3	340	754
Harrow	13	5	2	387	861
Havering	15	6	3	466	1,016
Hillingdon	13	5	2	391	858
Hounslow	13	5	3	388	854
Kingston upon Thames	8	5	2	233	522
Merton	9	5	2	266	585
Newham	15	6	4	455	999
Redbridge	13	5	1	387	851
Richmond upon Thames	7	5	1	228	510
Sutton	10	5	1	297	650
Waltham Forest	13	5	2	390	857
Camden	8	5	5	262	581
City of London	‡	‡	‡	14	49
Greenwich	14	5	6	417	920
Hackney	10	5	10	304	684
Hammersmith and Fulham	7	5	3	226	507
Islington	9	5	8	284	636
Kensington and Chelsea	5	5	2	122	281
Lambeth	11	5	9	344	774
Lewisham	13	5	3	394	867
Southwark	12	5	6	365	813
Tower Hamlets	10	5	3	324	706
Wandsworth	11	5	7	348	772
Westminster	8	5	5	254	573
Birmingham	72	28	20	2,215	4,839
Coventry	21	8	6	643	1,409
Dudley	20	8	3	632	1,385
Sandwell	21	8	3	641	1,401
Solihull	14	6	4	446	972
Walsall	19	7	4	583	1,268
Wolverhampton	17	7	2	531	1,158

Indicative Maxima 1990-91: National Priority Areas and Local Priorities	*18 Health Education* £,000	*19 Youth and Community Workers* £,000	*21 Adult Literacy* £,000	*Local priorities* £,000	*Totals* £,000
Knowsley	11	5	8	349	776
Liverpool	33	13	18	1,014	2,224
St. Helens	14	6	4	425	932
Sefton	19	8	2	597	1,296
Wirral	22	9	6	693	1,514
Bolton	19	7	10	583	1,278
Bury	11	5	3	351	772
Manchester	31	12	8	962	2,115
Oldham	16	6	3	493	1,080
Rochdale	15	6	4	455	995
Salford	15	6	8	454	1,011
Stockport	19	8	3	587	1,281
Tameside	15	6	6	469	1,027
Trafford	13	5	3	393	864
Barnsley	14	6	3	442	965
Doncaster	21	8	3	634	1,382
Rotherham	18	7	5	560	1,217
Sheffield	31	12	7	949	2,076
Bradford	35	14	5	1,068	2,305
Calderdale	14	5	3	418	917
Kirklees	26	10	7	814	1,770
Leeds	44	17	12	1,367	2,952
Wakefield	20	8	7	625	1,362
Gateshead	12	5	1	382	838
Newcastle upon Tyne	17	7	2	520	1,131
North Tyneside	13	5	2	398	866
South Tyneside	11	5	1	329	724
Sunderland	21	8	3	641	1,396
Isles of Scilly	[2]—	[2]—	[2]—	5	12
Avon	57	22	15	1,768	3,859
Bedfordshire	36	14	4	1,106	2,385
Berkshire	47	18	12	1,446	3,156
Buckinghamshire	39	15	4	1,215	2,651
Cambridgeshire	41	16	5	1,277	2,778
Cheshire	66	26	19	2,039	4,443
Cleveland	41	16	8	1,252	2,725
Cornwall	29	11	5	883	1,917
Cumbria	32	12	6	978	2,126
Derbyshire	59	23	16	1,817	3,955
Devon	58	23	8	1,800	3,920
Dorset	35	14	6	1,069	2,313
Durham	40	15	14	1,220	2,665
East Sussex	35	14	3	1,088	2,367
Essex	97	38	22	2,985	6,478
Gloucestershire	34	13	4	1,035	2,253
Hampshire	94	36	22	2,895	6,324
Hereford and Worcester	43	17	5	1,312	2,839
Hertfordshire	65	25	9	1,995	4,332
Humberside	58	23	20	1,792	3,891
Isle of Wight	8	5	6	233	520
Kent	95	37	17	2,913	6,311
Lancashire	94	37	29	2,909	6,360
Leicestershire	59	23	12	1,809	3,929
Lincolnshire	36	14	3	1,119	2,429
Norfolk	45	17	9	1,376	3,002
North Yorkshire	43	17	8	1,329	2,887
Northamptonshire	40	15	5	1,219	2,636
Northumberland	20	8	3	617	1,327
Nottinghamshire	64	25	25	1,975	4,306
Oxfordshire	32	13	13	1,000	2,185
Shropshire	27	11	7	831	1,808
Somerset	29	11	5	881	1,918
Staffordshire	69	27	10	2,115	4,584
Suffolk	39	15	6	1,198	2,585
Surrey	53	21	10	1,630	3,565
Warwickshire	32	13	5	986	2,163
West Sussex	39	15	6	1,215	2,642
Wiltshire	36	14	5	1,104	2,409

Indicative Maxima 1990-91: National Priority Areas and Local Priorities	*18 Health Education*	*19 Youth and Community Workers*	*21 Adult Literacy*	*Local priorities*	*Totals*
	£,000	*£,000*	*£,000*	*£,000*	*£,000*
Totals	2,977	1,191	696	91,700	[3]213,175

[1] Single amount for NPAs 1-4, 8, 9, 11, 18, 19 and 21.
[2] Single amount for all NPAs excluding 5, 6, 7, 10 and 20.
[3] Including £13,100,000 for NPAs 5, 6, 7, 10 and 20 yet to be distributed.
Totals exclude Wigan for which maxima have not been set.

Table C: LEATG Final Maxima

LEA	*NPA 1 Management*	*NPA 2 Appraisal*	*NPA 3A Basic Curriculum*	*NPA 3B Primary Maths*	*NPA 3C Primary Science*
	£	£	£	£	£
Barking and Dagenham	36,000	5,000	202,000	18,000	18,000
Barnet	75,000	25,000	320,000	28,000	28,000
Bexley	97,000	10,000	237,000	22,000	22,000
Brent	37,000	70,000	237,000	27,000	27,000
Bromley	42,000	78,000	267,000	26,000	26,000
Croydon	49,000	92,000	314,000	33,000	33,000
Ealing	91,000	30,000	267,000	32,000	32,000
Enfield	44,000	82,000	279,000	28,000	28,000
Haringey	29,000	54,000	183,000	21,000	21,000
Harrow	70,000	0	205,000	23,000	23,000
Havering	52,000	8,000	327,000	25,000	25,000
Hillingdon	35,000	66,000	224,000	22,000	22,000
Hounslow	34,000	64,000	218,000	22,000	22,000
Kingston upon Thames	25,000	30,000	122,000	12,000	12,000
Merton	23,000	43,000	147,000	11,000	11,000
Newham	72,000	4,000	277,000	25,000	25,000
Redbridge	35,000	66,000	223,000	22,000	22,000
Richmond upon Thames	18,000	34,000	116,000	12,000	12,000
Sutton	52,000	0	183,000	14,000	14,000
Waltham Forest	44,000	30,000	241,000	22,000	22,000
Camden	23,000	21,000	164,000	12,000	12,000
City of London	[1]	[1]	5,000	[1]	[1]
Greenwich	104,000	5,000	241,000	24,000	24,000
Hackney	46,000	0	192,000	19,000	19,000
Hammersmith and Fulham	50,000	0	111,000	11,000	11,000
Islington	23,000	43,000	147,000	17,000	17,000
Kensington and Chelsea	12,000	22,000	73,000	8,000	8,000
Lambeth	28,000	53,000	180,000	23,000	23,000
Lewisham	34,000	64,000	216,000	23,000	23,000
Southwark	37,000	50,000	204,000	23,000	28,000
Tower Hamlets	31,000	57,000	194,000	21,000	21,000
Wandsworth	30,000	57,000	194,000	20,000	20,000
Westminster	30,000	0	139,000	12,000	12,000
Birmingham	260,000	100,000	1,340,000	197,000	197,000
Coventry	80,000	10,000	418,000	36,000	36,000
Dudley	52,000	78,000	352,000	35,000	35,000
Sandwell	98,000	40,000	370,000	35,000	35,000
Solihull	38,000	72,000	243,000	23,000	23,000
Walsall	52,000	22,000	385,000	41,000	41,000
Wolverhampton	45,000	85,000	289,000	29,000	29,000
Knowsley	40,000	0	231,000	26,000	26,000
Liverpool	87,000	163,000	554,000	57,000	57,000
St. Helens	55,000	46,000	224,000	22,000	22,000
Sefton	61,000	0	412,000	39,000	32,000
Wirral	100,000	30,000	418,000	38,000	0
Bolton	50,000	94,000	321,000	32,000	32,000
Bury	33,000	34,000	211,000	0	0
Manchester	78,000	147,000	499,000	54,000	54,000
Oldham	44,000	82,000	279,000	29,000	29,000
Rochdale	50,000	26,000	297,000	25,000	25,000
Salford	42,000	79,000	268,000	28,000	28,000
Stockport	51,000	50,000	367,000	32,000	32,000
Tameside	40,000	75,000	257,000	26,000	26,000
Trafford	33,000	62,000	211,000	22,000	22,000
Wigan	59,000	111,000	379,000	37,000	37,000

LEA	NPA 1 Management	NPA 2 Appraisal	NPA 3A Basic Curriculum	NPA 3B Primary Maths	NPA 3C Primary Science
	£	£	£	£	£
Barnsley	59,000	3,000	299,000	24,000	24,000
Doncaster	75,000	42,000	387,000	33,000	33,000
Rotherham	49,000	0	400,000	29,000	29,000
Sheffield	81,000	152,000	517,000	53,000	53,000
Bradford	102,000	132,000	615,000	47,000	47,000
Calderdale	77,000	5,000	234,000	36,000	36,000
Kirklees	202,000	0	447,000	42,000	42,000
Leeds	120,000	225,000	764,000	63,000	63,000
Wakefield	54,000	102,000	347,000	32,000	32,000
Gateshead	64,000	14,000	238,000	22,000	22,000
Newcastle upon Tyne	127,000	0	283,000	27,000	27,000
North Tyneside	34,000	0	281,000	19,000	19,000
South Tyneside	27,000	51,000	172,000	18,000	18,000
Sunderland	57,000	106,000	362,000	37,000	37,000
Isles of Scilly	[2]	[2]	7,000	[2]	[2]
Avon	353,000	0	1,064,000	100,000	100,000
Bedfordshire	188,000	86,000	607,000	50,000	50,000
Berkshire	195,000	105,000	830,000	76,000	76,000
Buckinghamshire	109,000	205,000	697,000	78,000	78,000
Cambridgeshire	174,000	150,000	718,000	73,000	73,000
Cheshire	228,000	150,000	1,256,000	111,000	111,000
Cleveland	190,000	30,000	796,000	69,000	69,000
Cornwall	147,000	30,000	546,000	48,000	48,000
Cumbria	86,000	161,000	547,000	53,000	53,000
Derbyshire	160,000	300,000	1,019,000	100,000	100,000
Devon	215,000	226,000	978,000	97,000	97,000
Dorset	148,000	120,000	594,000	52,000	52,000
Durham	156,000	100,000	726,000	68,000	68,000
East Sussex	143,000	80,000	636,000	58,000	58,000
Essex	266,000	498,000	1,692,000	163,000	163,000
Gloucestershire	134,000	100,000	584,000	55,000	55,000
Hampshire	655,000	60,000	1,585,000	165,000	165,000
Hereford and Worcester	250,000	25,000	769,000	61,000	61,000
Hertfordshire	170,000	319,000	1,083,000	101,000	101,000
Humberside	197,000	100,000	1,171,000	94,000	94,000
Isle of Wight	20,000	37,000	126,000	9,000	9,000
Kent	258,000	483,000	1,643,000	153,000	153,000
Lancashire	246,000	461,000	1,567,000	159,000	159,000
Leicestershire	160,000	300,000	1,020,000	99,000	99,000
Lincolnshire	127,000	85,000	694,000	61,000	61,000
Norfolk	120,000	225,000	763,000	79,000	79,000
North Yorkshire	115,000	215,000	732,000	70,000	70,000
Northamptonshire	150,000	20,000	840,000	64,000	64,000
Northumberland	56,000	20,000	414,000	38,000	38,000
Nottinghamshire	204,000	202,000	1,149,000	100,000	100,000
Oxfordshire	185,000	15,000	585,000	50,000	50,000
Shropshire	106,000	30,000	527,000	42,000	42,000
Somerset	74,000	139,000	474,000	45,000	45,000
Staffordshire	295,000	50,000	1,365,000	110,000	110,000
Suffolk	205,000	0	764,000	55,000	55,000
Surrey	191,000	205,000	916,000	99,000	99,000
Warwickshire	84,000	157,000	533,000	59,000	59,000
West Sussex	107,000	200,000	681,000	67,000	67,000
Wiltshire	93,000	108,000	654,000	58,000	58,000
Totals	10,944,000	9,198,000	53,636,000	5,092,000	5,052,000

LEA	NPA 4 Under "rising fives"	NPA 5 SEN: Hearing	NPA 6 SEN: Sight	NPA 7 SEN: SLD	NPA 8 SEN: Designated Teachers
	£	£	£	£	£
Barking and Dagenham	5,000	0	0	0	5,000
Barnet	9,000	21,000	21,000	21,000	6,000
Bexley	7,000	23,000	18,000	29,000	5,000
Brent	8,000	12,000	12,000	12,000	5,000
Bromley	8,000	13,000	9,000	9,000	5,000
Croydon	10,000	21,000	14,000	14,000	6,000
Ealing	9,000	5,000	0	5,000	5,000
Enfield	8,000	0	0	0	5,000

LEA	NPA 4 Under "rising fives"	NPA 5 SEN: Hearing	NPA 6 SEN: Sight	NPA 7 SEN: SLD	NPA 8 SEN: Designated Teachers
	£	£	£	£	£
Haringey	6,000	17,000	0	23,000	5,000
Harrow	6,000	21,000	6,000	14,000	5,000
Havering	8,000	14,000	0	21,000	5,000
Hillingdon	7,000	10,000	6,000	18,000	5,000
Hounslow	7,000	20,000	7,000	0	5,000
Kingston upon Thames	5,000	0	6,000	12,000	5,000
Merton	5,000	0	0	21,000	5,000
Newham	8,000	21,000	6,000	21,000	5,000
Redbridge	7,000	13,000	0	21,000	5,000
Richmond upon Thames	5,000	0	0	26,000	5,000
Sutton	5,000	0	0	21,000	5,000
Waltham Forest	7,000	10,000	22,000	22,000	5,000
Camden	5,000	20,000	10,000	17,000	5,000
City of London	[1]	0	0	0	[1]
Greenwich	8,000	15,000	0	30,000	5,000
Hackney	6,000	16,000	16,000	4,000	5,000
Hammersmith and Fulham	5,000	16,000	12,000	12,900	5,000
Islington	5,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	5,000
Kensington and Chelsea	5,000	20,000	20,000	0	5,000
Lambeth	7,000	20,000	15,000	7,000	5,000
Lewisham	7,000	25,000	25,000	30,000	5,000
Southwark	7,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	5,000
Tower Hamlets	6,000	18,000	7,000	0	5,000
Wandsworth	6,000	0	0	0	5,000
Westminster	5,000	6,000	0	25,000	5,000
Birmingham	38,000	44,000	32,000	40,000	22,000
Coventry	11,000	6,000	0	18,000	7,000
Dudley	10,000	6,000	15,000	22,000	6,000
Sandwell	11,000	21,000	14,000	28,000	7,000
Solihull	7,000	13,000	4,000	19,000	5,000
Walsall	10,000	15,000	15,000	15,000	6,000
Wolverhampton	9,000	0	10,000	1,000	6,000
Knowsley	6,000	0	0	33,000	5,000
Liverpool	17,000	9,000	12,000	39,000	10,000
St. Helens	7,000	12,000	0	12,000	5,000
Sefton	10,000	19,000	0	10,000	6,000
Wirral	12,000	22,000	0	12,000	7,000
Bolton	10,000	7,000	7,000	19,000	6,000
Bury	6,000	6,000	0	18,000	5,000
Manchester	15,000	21,000	21,000	42,000	9,000
Oldham	9,000	25,000	9,000	30,000	5,000
Rochdale	8,000	18,000	18,000	18,000	5,000
Salford	8,000	0	0	0	5,000
Stockport	10,000	0	0	6,000	6,000
Tameside	8,000	10,000	2,000	15,000	5,000
Trafford	7,000	23,000	7,000	41,000	5,000
Wigan	11,000	18,000	12,000	12,000	7,000
Barnsley	8,000	6,000	0	8,000	5,000
Doncaster	11,000	15,000	0	20,000	7,000
Rotherham	9,000	20,000	4,000	15,000	6,000
Sheffield	16,000	32,000	13,000	46,000	10,000
Bradford	19,000	24,000	28,000	30,000	11,000
Calderdale	7,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	5,000
Kirklees	14,000	22,000	20,000	12,000	8,000
Leeds	23,000	33,000	26,000	18,000	14,000
Wakefield	11,000	4,000	5,000	6,000	7,000
Gateshead	7,000	7,000	6,000	37,000	5,000
Newcastle upon Tyne	9,000	26,000	6,000	28,000	6,000
North Tyneside	7,000	20,000	20,000	12,000	5,000
South Tyneside	5,000	22,000	0	0	5,000
Sunderland	11,000	0	13,000	19,000	7,000
Isles of Scilly	[2]	0	0	0	[2]
Avon	30,000	17,000	17,000	35,000	18,000
Bedfordshire	20,000	8,000	14,000	32,000	11,000
Berkshire	25,000	22,000	7,000	12,000	14,000
Buckinghamshire	23,000	7,000	3,000	19,000	13,000

LEA	NPA 4 Under "rising fives"	NPA 5 SEN: Hearing	NPA 6 SEN: Sight	NPA 7 SEN: SLD	NPA 8 SEN: Designated Teachers
	£	£	£	£	£
Cambridgeshire	23,000	17,000	10,000	37,000	13,000
Cheshire	34,000	34,000	16,000	23,000	20,000
Cleveland	22,000	5,000	16,600	52,400	13,000
Cornwall	15,000	5,000	0	14,000	9,000
Cumbria	16,000	40,000	7,000	10,000	10,000
Derbyshire	32,000	23,000	9,000	46,000	19,000
Devon	31,000	25,000	0	21,000	18,000
Dorset	18,000	22,000	22,000	22,000	11,000
Durham	21,000	27,000	19,000	28,000	13,000
East Sussex	19,000	33,000	17,000	19,000	11,000
Essex	52,000	40,000	21,000	60,000	31,000
Gloucestershire	17,000	21,000	21,000	34,000	10,000
Hampshire	0	20,000	12,000	21,000	29,000
Hereford and Worcester	23,000	30,000	23,000	19,000	13,000
Hertfordshire	33,000	15,000	4,000	28,000	20,000
Humberside	30,000	30,000	7,000	20,000	18,000
Isle of Wight	5,000	16,000	16,000	15,000	5,000
Kent	52,000	36,000	25,000	29,000	30,000
Lancashire	48,000	24,000	9,000	40,000	28,000
Leicestershire	32,000	16,000	17,000	32,000	19,000
Lincolnshire	19,000	9,000	24,000	30,000	12,000
Norfolk	24,000	17,000	13,000	36,000	14,000
North Yorkshire	22,000	25,000	7,000	32,000	13,000
Northamptonshire	21,000	20,000	6,000	10,000	13,000
Northumberland	11,000	7,000	0	41,000	7,000
Nottinghamshire	34,000	10,000	14,000	15,000	20,000
Oxfordshire	18,000	22,000	12,000	28,000	10,000
Shropshire	14,000	21,000	14,000	18,000	9,000
Somerset	15,000	0	18,000	33,000	9,000
Staffordshire	36,000	21,000	16,000	28,000	21,000
Suffolk	21,000	27,000	2,000	20,000	12,000
Surrey	28,000	15,000	4,000	15,000	17,000
Warwickshire	16,000	22,000	34,000	30,000	10,000
West Sussex	22,000	5,000	18,000	11,000	13,000
Wiltshire	19,000	0	7,000	39,000	11,000
Totals	1,550,000	1,698,000	1,093,600	2,231,400	1,000,000

	NPA 9 New technologies	NPA (10) Licensed teachers	NPA (10) Articled teachers	NPA 11 Management of pupils' behaviour	NPA 12 Management (FE)
	£	£	£	£	£
Barking and Dagenham	20,000	0	0	6,000	10,000
Barnet	34,000	30,000	0	10,000	21,000
Bexley	28,000	37,100	0	8,000	10,000
Brent	28,000	0	55,524	8,000	21,000
Bromley	31,000	9,000	0	9,000	13,000
Croydon	37,000	0	43,040	10,000	20,000
Ealing	31,000	48,400	21,520	9,000	12,000
Enfield	33,000	47,700	55,524	9,000	17,000
Haringey	22,000	72,000	0	6,000	15,000
Harrow	22,000	52,000	56,925	6,000	31,000
Havering	31,000	31,000	66,060	9,000	9,000
Hillingdon	26,000	42,700	107,600	7,000	8,000
Hounslow	26,000	14,600	0	7,000	11,000
Kingston upon Thames	14,000	26,000	0	5,000	13,000
Merton	17,000	30,000	0	5,000	9,000
Newham	29,000	91,000	80,550	8,000	21,000
Redbridge	26,000	17,500	0	7,000	7,000
Richmond upon Thames	14,000	10,000	0	5,000	15,000
Sutton	19,000	28,000	0	5,000	11,000
Waltham Forest	26,000	58,000	0	7,000	12,000
Camden	17,000	0	128,495	5,000	10,000
City of London	—	0	0	—	5,000
Greenwich	28,000	13,000	0	8,000	6,000
Hackney	19,000	37,000	93,941	5,000	13,000
Hammersmith and Fulham	13,000	17,000	0	5,000	18,000
Islington	17,000	106,000	93,941	5,000	16,000
Kensington and Chelsea	9,000	30,000	21,520	5,000	0
Lambeth	21,000	0	0	6,000	19,000

	NPA 9 New technologies	NPA (10) Licensed teachers	NPA (10) Articled teachers	NPA 11 Management of pupils' behaviour	NPA 12 Management (FE)
	£	£	£	£	£
Lewisham	25,000	0	0	7,000	15,000
Southwark	24,000	0	0	7,000	11,000
Tower Hamlets	23,000	38,330	208,602	6,000	0
Wandsworth	23,000	31,500	64,560	6,000	11,000
Westminster	14,000	8,000	8,608	5,000	25,000
Birmingham	146,000	0	0	41,000	66,000
Coventry	41,000	31,800	28,230	12,000	26,000
Dudley	39,000	42,000	0	11,000	34,000
Sandwell	41,000	48,250	0	12,000	25,000
Solihull	29,000	0	28,230	8,000	17,000
Walsall	39,000	0	0	11,000	15,000
Wolverhampton	34,000	0	0	10,000	21,000
Knowsley	23,000	0	0	6,000	11,000
Liverpool	65,000	0	0	18,000	39,000
St. Helens	26,000	0	0	7,000	22,000
Sefton	39,000	0	0	11,000	20,000
Wirral	45,000	0	0	13,000	27,000
Bolton	38,000	3,000	0	11,000	21,000
Bury	23,000	0	0	6,000	13,000
Manchester	59,000	0	0	17,000	56,000
Oldham	33,000	0	61,476	9,000	12,000
Rochdale	30,000	0	66,599	9,000	11,000
Salford	31,000	0	61,476	9,000	5,000
Stockport	38,000	1,000	0	11,000	22,000
Tameside	30,000	0	74,580	9,000	18,000
Trafford	25,000	0	0	7,000	18,000
Wigan	45,000	0	66,599	13,000	29,000
Barnsley	29,000	0	0	8,000	12,000
Doncaster	41,000	0	0	12,000	24,000
Rotherham	36,000	0	0	10,000	19,000
Sheffield	61,000	0	0	17,000	38,000
Bradford	69,000	20,500	0	19,000	40,000
Calderdale	28,000	0	0	8,000	12,000
Kirklees	53,000	0	0	15,000	29,000
Leeds	90,000	0	261,550	25,000	41,000
Wakefield	41,000	0	0	12,000	20,000
Gateshead	26,000	0	0	7,000	8,000
Newcastle upon Tyne	33,000	0	0	9,000	20,000
North Tyneside	25,000	0	0	7,000	16,000
South Tyneside	20,000	0	0	6,000	18,000
Sunderland	43,000	0	0	12,000	16,000
Isles of Scilly	[2]	0	0	0	0
Avon	115,000	0	0	32,000	61,000
Bedfordshire	71,000	35,000	76,995	20,000	40,000
Berkshire	92,000	30,000	0	26,000	64,000
Buckinghamshire	82,000	72,000	104,740	23,000	23,000
Cambridgeshire	84,000	27,360	0	24,000	35,000
Cheshire	132,000	0	0	37,000	70,000
Cleveland	82,000	0	0	23,000	37,000
Cornwall	59,000	0	0	17,000	23,000
Cumbria	64,000	0	0	18,000	29,000
Derbyshire	120,000	34,000	0	34,000	51,000
Devon	115,000	24,500	289,860	32,000	73,000
Dorset	70,000	20,000	0	20,000	34,000
Durham	80,000	0	0	22,000	40,000
East Sussex	70,000	0	0	20,000	43,000
Essex	199,000	162,000	0	56,000	71,000
Gloucestershire	66,000	30,330	67,995	19,000	41,000
Hampshire	186,000	0	124,325	52,000	109,000
Hereford and Worcester	85,000	6,000	0	24,000	49,000
Hertfordshire	127,000	93,000	0	36,000	82,000
Humberside	119,000	0	188,748	34,000	46,000
Isle of Wight	15,000	0	23,625	5,000	10,000
Kent	193,000	120,000	200,200	54,000	76,000
Lancashire	184,000	30,000	0	52,000	128,000
Leicestershire	120,000	0	0	34,000	47,000
Lincolnshire	73,000	40,600	0	21,000	34,000

	NPA 9 New technologies	NPA (10) Licensed teachers	NPA (10) Articled teachers	NPA 11 Management of pupils' behaviour	NPA 12 Management (FE)
	£	£	£	£	£
Norfolk	90,000	0	0	25,000	45,000
North Yorkshire	86,000	24,000	0	24,000	47,000
Northamptonshire	82,000	138,000	0	23,000	26,000
Northumberland	42,000	0	0	12,000	12,000
Nottinghamshire	126,000	12,200	0	36,000	81,000
Oxfordshire	64,000	10,950	0	18,000	43,000
Shropshire	54,000	0	0	15,000	30,000
Somerset	56,000	28,400	0	16,000	39,000
Staffordshire	139,000	28,000	0	39,000	65,000
Suffolk	79,000	0	0	22,000	37,000
Surrey	106,000	50,000	0	30,000	53,000
Warwickshire	63,000	0	28,230	18,000	42,000
West Sussex	80,000	10,000	94,500	23,000	35,000
Wiltshire	69,000	38,300	67,995	20,000	53,000
Totals	6,000,000	2,137,020	3,022,363	1,700,000	3,200,000

Local education authority	NPA 13 Subject competence	NPA 14 IT in FE	NPA 15 SEN in FE	NPA 16 Multi-ethnic society	NPA 17 Competence assessment
	£	£	£	£	£
Barking and Dagenham	6,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	6,000
Barnet	13,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	13,000
Bexley	6,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	6,000
Brent	13,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	13,000
Bromley	8,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	8,000
Croydon	12,000	6,000	5,000	5,000	12,000
Ealing	8,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	8,000
Enfield	11,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	11,000
Haringey	9,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	9,000
Harrow	19,000	9,000	8,000	8,000	19,000
Havering	6,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	6,000
Hillingdon	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
Hounslow	7,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	7,000
Kingston upon Thames	8,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	8,000
Merton	6,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	6,000
Newham	13,000	7,000	6,000	6,000	13,000
Redbridge	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
Richmond upon Thames	9,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	9,000
Sutton	7,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	7,000
Waltham Forest	8,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	8,000
Camden	6,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	6,000
City of London	0	5,000	0	0	0
Greenwich	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
Hackney	6,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	6,000
Hammersmith and Fulham	11,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	11,000
Islington	8,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	8,000
Kensington and Chelsea	0	0	0	0	0
Lambeth	12,000	6,000	5,000	5,000	12,000
Lewisham	9,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	9,000
Southwark	7,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	7,000
Tower Hamlets	5,000	0	5,000	5,000	5,000
Wandsworth	14,000	5,000	6,000	6,000	14,000
Westminster	11,000	8,000	5,000	5,000	11,000
Birmingham	41,000	19,000	16,000	16,000	41,000
Coventry	16,000	8,000	7,000	7,000	16,000
Dudley	21,000	10,000	9,000	9,000	21,000
Sandwell	16,000	8,000	7,000	7,000	16,000
Solihull	11,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	11,000
Walsall	9,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	9,000
Wolverhampton	13,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	13,000
Knowsley	7,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	7,000
Liverpool	24,000	11,000	10,000	10,000	24,000
St. Helens	14,000	7,000	6,000	6,000	14,000
Sefton	12,000	6,000	5,000	5,000	12,000
Wirral	17,000	8,000	7,000	7,000	17,000
Bolton	13,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	13,000
Bury	8,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	8,000

Local education authority	*NPA 13 Subject competence* £	*NPA 14 IT in FE* £	*NPA 15 SEN in FE* £	*NPA 16 Multi-ethnic society* £	*NPA 17 Competence assessment* £
Manchester	35,000	16,000	14,000	14,000	35,000
Oldham	8,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	8,000
Rochdale	7,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	7,000
Salford	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
Stockport	13,000	7,000	6,000	6,000	13,000
Tameside	11,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	11,000
Trafford	11,000	6,000	5,000	5,000	11,000
Wigan	18,000	9,000	8,000	8,000	18,000
Barnsley	7,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	7,000
Doncaster	15,000	7,000	7,000	7,000	15,000
Rotherham	12,000	6,000	5,000	5,000	12,000
Sheffield	24,000	11,000	10,000	10,000	24,000
Bradford	25,000	12,000	10,000	10,000	25,000
Calderdale	7,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	7,000
Kirklees	18,000	9,000	8,000	8,000	18,000
Leeds	25,000	12,000	11,000	11,000	25,000
Wakefield	13,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	13,000
Gateshead	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
Newcastle upon Tyne	13,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	13,000
North Tyneside	10,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	10,000
South Tyneside	11,000	6,000	5,000	5,000	11,000
Sunderland	10,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	10,000
Isles of Scilly	0	0	0	0	0
Avon	38,000	18,000	15,000	15,000	38,000
Bedfordshire	25,000	12,000	10,000	10,000	25,000
Berkshire	40,000	18,000	16,000	16,000	40,000
Buckinghamshire	14,000	7,000	6,000	6,000	14,000
Cambridgeshire	22,000	10,000	9,000	9,000	22,000
Cheshire	44,000	20,000	18,000	18,000	44,000
Cleveland	23,000	11,000	10,000	10,000	23,000
Cornwall	14,000	7,000	6,000	6,000	14,000
Cumbria	18,000	9,000	8,000	8,000	18,000
Derbyshire	32,000	15,000	13,000	13,000	32,000
Devon	46,000	21,000	18,000	18,000	46,000
Dorset	21,000	10,000	9,000	9,000	21,000
Durham	25,000	12,000	10,000	10,000	25,000
East Sussex	27,000	13,000	11,000	11,000	27,000
Essex	44,000	21,000	18,000	18,000	44,000
Gloucestershire	26,000	12,000	11,000	11,000	26,000
Hampshire	68,000	31,000	27,000	27,000	68,000
Hereford and Worcester	31,000	14,000	13,000	13,000	31,000
Hertfordshire	51,000	24,000	20,000	20,000	51,000
Humberside	29,000	13,000	12,000	12,000	29,000
Isle of Wight	6,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	6,000
Kent	47,000	22,000	19,000	19,000	47,000
Lancashire	80,000	37,000	31,000	31,000	80,000
Leicestershire	29,000	14,000	12,000	12,000	29,000
Lincolnshire	21,000	10,000	9,000	9,000	21,000
Norfolk	28,000	13,000	11,000	11,000	28,000
North Yorkshire	29,000	14,000	12,000	12,000	29,000
Northamptonshire	16,000	8,000	7,000	7,000	16,000
Northumberland	7,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	7,000
Nottinghamshire	51,000	23,000	20,000	20,000	51,000
Oxfordshire	27,000	13,000	11,000	11,000	27,000
Shropshire	19,000	9,000	8,000	8,000	19,000
Somerset	24,000	12,000	10,000	10,000	24,000
Staffordshire	41,000	19,000	16,000	16,000	41,000
Suffolk	23,000	11,000	10,000	10,000	23,000
Surrey	33,000	15,000	13,000	13,000	33,000
Warwickshire	26,000	12,000	11,000	11,000	26,000
West Sussex	22,000	10,000	9,000	9,000	22,000
Wiltshire	33,000	15,000	13,000	13,000	33,000
Totals	1,998,000	1,000,000	899,000	899,000	1,998,000

LEA	NPA 18 Health Education £	NPA 19 Youth and Community Workers £	NPA 21 Adult Literacy £
Barking and Dagenham	10,000	5,000	3,000
Barnet	17,000	7,000	3,000
Bexley	14,000	5,000	1,000
Brent	14,000	6,000	4,000
Bromley	15,000	6,000	2,000
Croydon	18,000	7,000	5,000
Ealing	15,000	6,000	3,000
Enfield	16,000	7,000	2,000
Haringey	11,000	5,000	3,000
Harrow	13,000	5,000	2,000
Havering	15,000	6,000	3,000
Hillingdon	13,000	5,000	2,000
Hounslow	13,000	5,000	3,000
Kingston upon Thames	8,000	5,000	2,000
Merton	9,000	5,000	2,000
Newham	15,000	6,000	4,000
Redbridge	13,000	5,000	1,000
Richmond upon Thames	7,000	5,000	1,000
Sutton	10,000	5,000	1,000
Waltham Forest	13,000	5,000	2,000
Camden	8,000	5,000	5,000
City of London	0	0	0
Greenwich	14,000	5,000	6,000
Hackney	10,000	5,000	10,000
Hammersmith and Fulham	7,000	5,000	3,000
Islington	9,000	5,000	8,000
Kensington and Chelsea	5,000	5,000	2,000
Lambeth	11,000	5,000	9,000
Lewisham	13,000	5,000	3,000
Southwark	12,000	5,000	6,000
Tower Hamlets	10,000	5,000	3,000
Wandsworth	12,000	5,000	7,000
Westminster	7,000	5,000	5,000
Birmingham	72,000	28,000	20,000
Coventry	21,000	8,000	6,000
Dudley	20,000	8,000	3,000
Sandwell	21,000	8,000	3,000
Solihull	14,000	6,000	4,000
Walsall	19,000	7,000	4,000
Wolverhampton	17,000	7,000	2,000
Knowsley	11,000	5,000	8,000
Liverpool	33,000	13,000	18,000
St. Helens	14,000	6,000	4,000
Sefton	19,000	8,000	2,000
Wirral	22,000	9,000	6,000
Bolton	19,000	7,000	10,000
Bury	11,000	5,000	3,000
Manchester	31,000	12,000	8,000
Oldham	16,000	6,000	3,000
Rochdale	15,000	6,000	4,000
Salford	15,000	6,000	8,000
Stockport	19,000	8,000	3,000
Tameside	15,000	6,000	6,000
Trafford	13,000	5,000	3,000
Wigan	23,000	9,000	4,000
Barnsley	14,000	6,000	3,000
Doncaster	21,000	8,000	3,000
Rotherham	18,000	7,000	5,000
Sheffield	31,000	12,000	7,000
Bradford	35,000	14,000	5,000
Calderdale	14,000	5,000	3,000
Kirklees	26,000	10,000	7,000
Leeds	44,000	17,000	12,000
Wakefield	20,000	8,000	7,000
Gateshead	12,000	5,000	1,000
Newcastle upon Tyne	17,000	7,000	2,000
North Tyneside	13,000	5,000	2,000

LEA	NPA 18 Health Education £	NPA 19 Youth and Community Workers £	NPA 21 Adult Literacy £
South Tyneside	11,000	5,000	1,000
Sunderland	21,000	8,000	3,000
Isles of Scilly	0	0	0
Avon	57,000	22,000	15,000
Bedfordshire	36,000	14,000	4,000
Berkshire	47,000	18,000	12,000
Buckinghamshire	39,000	15,000	4,000
Cambridgeshire	41,000	16,000	5,000
Cheshire	66,000	26,000	19,000
Cleveland	41,000	16,000	8,000
Cornwall	29,000	11,000	5,000
Cumbria	32,000	12,000	6,000
Derbyshire	59,000	23,000	16,000
Devon	58,000	23,000	8,000
Dorset	35,000	14,000	6,000
Durham	40,000	15,000	14,000
East Sussex	35,000	14,000	3,000
Essex	97,000	38,000	22,000
Gloucestershire	34,000	13,000	4,000
Hampshire	94,000	36,000	22,000
Hereford and Worcester	43,000	17,000	5,000
Hertfordshire	65,000	25,000	9,000
Humberside	58,000	23,000	20,000
Isle of Wight	8,000	5,000	6,000
Kent	95,000	37,000	17,000
Lancashire	94,000	37,000	29,000
Leicestershire	59,000	23,000	12,000
Lincolnshire	36,000	14,000	3,000
Norfolk	45,000	17,000	9,000
North Yorkshire	43,000	17,000	8,000
Northamptonshire	40,000	15,000	5,000
Northumberland	20,000	8,000	3,000
Nottinghamshire	64,000	25,000	25,000
Oxfordshire	32,000	13,000	13,000
Shropshire	27,000	11,000	7,000
Somerset	29,000	11,000	5,000
Staffordshire	69,000	27,000	10,000
Suffolk	39,000	15,000	6,000
Surrey	53,000	21,000	10,000
Warwickshire	32,000	13,000	5,000
West Sussex	39,000	15,000	6,000
Wiltshire	36,000	14,000	5,000
Totals	3,000,000	1,200,000	700,000

LEA	Total all NPAs £	Local priorities £	Total NPA and LPA £
Barking and Dagenham	370,000	302,000	672,000
Barnet	720,000	531,000	1,251,000
Bexley	600,100	418,000	1,018,100
Brent	627,524	444,000	1,071,524
Bromley	599,000	473,000	1,072,000
Croydon	766,040	568,000	1,334,040
Ealing	652,920	474,000	1,126,920
Enfield	698,224	505,000	1,203,224
Haringey	526,000	340,000	866,000
Harrow	623,925	387,000	1,010,925
Havering	682,060	466,000	1,148,060
Hillingdon	651,300	391,000	1,042,300
Hounslow	507,600	388,000	895,600
Kingston upon Thames	333,000	233,000	566,000
Merton	370,000	266,000	636,000
Newham	763,550	455,000	1,218,550
Redbridge	515,500	387,000	902,500
Richmond upon Thames	318,000	228,000	546,000
Sutton	402,000	297,000	699,000
Waltham Forest	579,000	390,000	969,000
Camden	494,495	262,000	756,495
City of London	15,000	14,000	29,000

LEA	Total all NPAs	Local priorities	Total NPA and LPA
	£	£	£
Greenwich	561,000	417,000	978,000
Hackney	542,941	304,000	846,941
Hammersmith and Fulham	338,000	226,000	564,000
Islington	607,941	284,000	891,941
Kensington and Chelsea	250,520	122,000	372,520
Lambeth	472,000	344,000	816,000
Lewisham	553,000	394,000	947,000
Southwark	451,000	365,000	816,000
Tower Hamlets	673,932	324,000	997,932
Wandsworth	537,060	348,000	885,060
Westminster	351,608	254,000	605,608
Birmingham	2,740,000	2,215,000	4,955,000
Coventry	850,030	643,000	1,493,030
Dudley	838,000	632,000	1,470,000
Sandwell	871,250	641,000	1,512,250
Solihull	590,230	446,000	1,036,230
Walsall	730,000	583,000	1,313,000
Wolverhampton	638,000	531,000	1,169,000
Knowsley	460,000	349,000	809,000
Liverpool	1,270,000	1,014,000	2,284,000
St. Helens	531,000	425,000	956,000
Sefton	728,000	597,000	1,325,000
Wirral	817,000	693,000	1,510,000
Bolton	731,000	583,000	1,314,000
Bury	405,000	351,000	756,000
Manchester	1,237,000	962,000	2,199,000
Oldham	712,476	493,000	1,205,476
Rochdale	660,599	455,000	1,115,599
Salford	618,476	454,000	1,072,476
Stockport	701,000	587,000	1,288,000
Tameside	659,580	469,000	1,128,580
Trafford	542,000	393,000	935,000
Wigan	933,599	700,000	1,633,599
Barnsley	537,000	442,000	979,000
Doncaster	783,000	634,000	1,417,000
Rotherham	696,000	560,000	1,256,000
Sheffield	1,218,000	949,000	2,167,000
Bradford	1,339,500	1,068,000	2,407,500
Calderdale	559,000	418,000	977,000
Kirklees	1,010,000	814,000	1,824,000
Leeds	1,923,550	1,367,000	3,290,550
Wakefield	752,000	625,000	1,377,000
Gateshead	506,000	382,000	888,000
Newcastle upon Tyne	671,000	520,000	1,191,000
North Tyneside	520,000	398,000	918,000
South Tyneside	417,000	329,000	746,000
Sunderland	787,000	641,000	1,428,000
Isles of Scilly	7,000	5,000	12,000
Avon	2,160,000	1,768,000	3,928,000
Bedfordshire	1,444,995	1,106,000	2,550,000
Berkshire	1,781,000	1,446,000	3,227,000
Buckinghamshire	1,641,740	1,215,000	2,856,740
Cambridgeshire	1,592,360	1,277,000	2,869,360
Cheshire	2,477,000	2,039,000	4,516,000
Cleveland	1,547,000	1,252,000	2,799,000
Cornwall	1,053,000	883,000	1,936,000
Cumbria	1,205,000	978,000	2,183,000
Derbyshire	2,250,000	1,817,000	4,067,000
Devon	2,480,360	1,800,000	4,280,360
Dorset	1,330,000	1,069,000	2,399,000
Durham	1,519,000	1,220,000	2,739,000
East Sussex	1,348,000	1,088,000	2,436,000
Essex	3,776,000	2,985,000	6,761,000
Gloucestershire	1,392,325	1,035,000	2,427,325
Hampshire	3,556,325	2,895,000	6,451,325
Hereford and Worcester	1,605,000	1,312,000	2,917,000
Hertfordshire	2,477,000	1,995,000	4,472,000
Humberside	2,344,748	1,792,000	4,136,748
Isle of Wight	357,625	233,000	590,625

LEA	Total all NPAs	Local priorities	Total NPA and LPA
	£	£	£
Kent	3,808,200	2,913,000	6,721,200
Lancashire	3,554,000	2,909,000	6,463,000
Leicestershire	2,185,000	1,809,000	3,994,000
Lincolnshire	1,413,600	1,119,000	2,532,600
Norfolk	1,692,000	1,376,000	3,068,000
North Yorkshire	1,646,000	1,329,000	2,975,000
Northamptonshire	1,591,000	1,219,000	2,810,000
Northumberland	758,000	617,000	1,375,000
Nottinghamshire	2,382,200	1,975,000	4,357,200
Oxfordshire	1,257,950	1,000,000	2,257,950
Shropshire	1,030,000	831,000	1,861,000
Somerset	1,116,400	881,000	1,997,400
Staffordshire	2,562,000	2,115,000	4,677,000
Suffolk	1,436,000	1,198,000	2,634,000
Surrey	2,019,000	1,630,000	3,649,000
Warwickshire	1,291,230	986,000	2,277,230
West Sussex	1,565,500	1,215,000	2,780,500
Wiltshire	1,457,295	1,104,000	2,561,295
Totals	119,248,383	92,400,000	211,648,383

Nursery Education

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has on (i) the amount of expenditure made by each local authority on nursery education in nursery schools, nursery classes and reception classes and (ii) the average unit cost per place in each local authority.

Mrs. Rumbold: The latest available data on expenditure by local authorities on nursery schools comes from returns made to the Department of the Environment on spending in 1986-87. The details are set out in the table. Subsequent returns have not separately identified spending on nursery schools, nursery classes or reception classes. The DES chapter of the annual public expenditure White Paper shows the sums within outturn spending attributed to provision for under-fives nationally, and the allowance within grant settlements for such spending—see tables 11.2 and 11.6 of Cm. 1011.

Maintained nursery schools
Net institutional expenditure[1]—1986-87 (cash)

	Total expenditure (£000)	Cost per pupil[2] (£)
Barking	—	—
Barnet	344	1,295
Bexley	124	1,250
Brent	491	2,220
Bromley	—	—
Croydon	339	1,350
Ealing	512	1,785
Enfield	—	—
Haringey	208	1,015
Harrow	—	—
Havering	—	—
Hillingdon	81	1,360
Hounslow	—	—
Kingston upon Thames	208	1,375
Merton	53	1,835
Newham	871	1,685
Redbridge	—	—
Richmond upon Thames	45	1,240
Sutton	169	1,410
Waltham Forest	290	1,590
ILEA	7,623	2,455
Birmingham	1,987	1,235
Coventry	345	1,260
Dudley	435	1,845
Sandwell	205	1,270
Solihull	—	—
Walsall	541	1,235
Wolverhampton	438	1,065
Knowsley	—	—
Liverpool	548	1,435
St. Helens	60	1,470
Sefton	195	1,215
Wirral	230	1,790
Bolton	434	1,220
Bury	142	1,335
Manchester	929	1,990
Oldham	—	—
Rochdale	666	1,375
Salford	1,166	1,660
Stockport	633	1,265
Tameside	327	1,735
Trafford	—	—
Wigan	154	1,355
Barnsley	112	1,275
Doncaster	—	—
Rotherham	230	1,115
Sheffield	744	1,640
Bradford	611	1,730
Calderdale	90	1,400
Kirklees	422	1,220
Leeds	211	1,270
Wakefield	341	1,440
Gateshead	55	1,590
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	862	1,610
North Tyneside	219	1,200
South Tyneside	475	1,260
Sunderland	715	1,340
Isles of Scilly	—	—
Avon	1,628	1,285
Bedfordshire	1,021	1,195
Berkshire	1,516	1,390
Buckinghamshire	325	1,265
Cambridgeshire	554	1,430
Cheshire	525	1,215
Cleveland	87	1,115
Cornwall	94	1,275
Cumbria	591	1,485
Derbyshire	938	1,415
Devon	158	1,025
Dorset	—	—
Durham	1,917	1,460
East Sussex	199	1,350
Essex	184	1,355
Gloucestershire	—	—

	Total expenditure (£000)	Cost per pupil[2] (£)
Hampshire	157	1,215
Hereford and Worcester	—	—
Hertfordshire	1,337	1,485
Humberside	1,481	2,515
Isle of Wight	—	—
Kent	63	1,575
Lancashire	2,481	1,405
Leicestershire	31	1,220
Lincolnshire	240	1,205
Norfolk	243	1,235
North Yorkshire	243	1,300
Northamptonshire	386	1,280
Northumberland	213	2,395
Nottinghamshire	514	1,530
Oxfordshire	385	1,285
Shropshire	111	1,390
Somerset	—	—
Staffordshire	1,676	1,165
Suffolk	103	1,165
Surrey	355	1,420
Warwickshire	456	1,240
West Sussex	230	990
Wiltshire	—	—

[1] Net Institutional Expenditure includes the cost of salaries and wages, premises and certain supplies and services. It does not include the cost of school meal, central administration and inspection, dept charges or revenue contributions to capital outlay.

[2] The figures are based on local education authority expenditure returns to Department of the Environment and pupil number returns to Department of Education and Science.

Polytechnic Staff

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the numbers and average remuneration of administrative and clerical staff employed in the polytechnic sector for each of the past five years.

Mr. Jackson: This information is not collected centrally. Publications by the Polytechnic Finance Officers Group (PFOG) for the years 1985-86 to 1987-88 give the following number of staff defined by PFOG as administrative, professional and clerical staff in the polytechnics, excluding Wales.

Actual FTE staff

	Numbers
As at 1 November 1985	3,008
As at 1 November 1986	3,315
As at 1 November 1987	3,288

The figures for 1985 and 1987 are for 28 polytechnics only.

Veterinary Students

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions he has had with the universities funding council on the Page report recommendation that veterinary student places should be funded by charging an element of private fees to all veterinary students; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: None. Determination of tuition fees is for institutions themselves.

Capital Grant Allocations

Mr. Peter Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about capital grant allocations for schools in Bolton; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Since the announcement last December of LEAs' annual capital guidelines and capital allocations for voluntary aided and grant-maintained schools in 1990-91, my right hon. Friend has received representations about capital expenditure in Bolton from four constituents of my hon. Friend; two constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville); and one from a constituent of the hon. Member for Bolton, South-East (Mr. Young). The director of education and arts for the metropolitan borough of Bolton has also written to my right hon. Friend on behalf of the authority's education and arts committee about the level of the authority's annual capital guideline for 1990-91. Finally, the governors of one primary and two high schools in Bolton have made representations directly to my right hon. Friend on the same matter.

Nationally, annual capital guidelines (ACGs) for LEA expenditure in 1990-91 total £485 million; under the old funding system, the figure for capital allocations in the current year, 1989-90, is £352 million. Authorities are free within the flexibilities of the Local Government Acts to spend above the level of their ACGs from capital receipts and other sources. The amount available to the voluntary aided sector has increased from £86 million in 1989-90 to £109 million in 1990-91. For grant-maintained schools £8·5 million has been made available in 1990-91.

Bolton local education authority's annual capital guideline for 1990-91 was £802,000. The capital allocation for the voluntary aided sector in Bolton was £137,000. The capital allocation for St James' CE school in Farnworth, a grant-maintained school, was £667,000.

The split of resources between LEA-maintained, voluntary aided and grant-maintained schools was determined with regard to the relative needs of each sector. Bolton's ACG and its voluntary aided allocation reflect the extent to which the authority's plans accorded with my right hon. Friend's criteria. It is entirely for Bolton to decide its spending priorities in the light of local needs and circumstances, and the resources available. The allocation of the available resources for the grant-maintained sector was decided by my right hon. Friend in the light of the particular circumstances of each school, taking into account previous levels of neglect. The total sum of capital grant available to grant-maintained schools in 1990-91 is about one third of the original bids: a very similar proportion to that which can be met by LEAs under their ACGs.

School-Industry Links

Mr. Andrew Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the progress of links between schools and industry.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Good progress is being made in encouraging links between schools and local industry and commerce. A recent DES survey of 500 secondary and 500 primary schools, the findings of which will shortly be published in a DES statistical bulletin, found that around 90 per cent. of secondary and over 50 per cent. of primary

schools had links with local businesses. The DES is involved with the Department of Trade and Industry, the Training Agency, employers, and national school-business link organisations in a range of initiatives designed to assist in the establishment of effective links between schools and industry.

Arts Education

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last met the rector of the Royal College of Art to discuss education in the arts.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend has not yet had an opportunity to meet the rector of the Royal College of Art. However, I have myself met the rector on several occasions during the last year, most recently on 21 May when I was guest speaker at a college function and spoke about the arts in further and higher education.

Polytechnics

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to redesignate polytechnics as universities.

Mr. Jackson: My right hon. Friend has no such plans.

Higher Education

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the findings of the Ball report on access to higher education, a copy of which has been sent to his Department.

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has received a copy of the RSA report entitled "More Means Different"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jackson: I regard "More Means Different", the report of the RSA/Industry Matters higher education project directed by Sir Christopher Ball, as a valuable contribution to the current debate about future arrangements for higher education. It provides much for the Government and others to take into account in reviewing policies and practices.

University Teachers' Pay

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the progress of pay negotiations with university teaching unions.

Mr. Jackson: The Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals and the Association of University Teachers have agreed a settlement for 1990-91. This is subject to Government endorsement and the matter is now being urgently considered.

Assisted Places

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the total number of schools that now participate in the assisted places schemes; and how many places they currently offer between them.

Mr. Alan Howarth: There are now 294 participating schools in England offering some 33,366 assisted places. Of these schools, 16 will be offering places for the first time from this September.

Eutrophication

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what research has been undertaken into the possible health implications resulting from prolonged contact with algae connected with eutrophication.

Mr Heathcoat-Amory: I have been asked to reply.

The Natural Environment Research Council is sponsoring research at its institute of freshwater ecology and at higher education institutions including the university of Dundee, into the basic biology of algae and the formation of algal toxins. The aquatic weeds research unit of the Agriculture and Food Research Council is studying factors that determine the build-up of algae and possible methods of control.

The National Rivers Authority has established a task force of experts to study the factors which influence the formation of algal blooms and to make recommendations upon their control. As part of this exercise the NRA has engaged the water research centre to make a full literature search and review.

School Budgets

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many school governing bodies have refused to accept responsibility for managing their own budgets.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department has received no formal notification of any governing body refusing to accept responsibility for managing its own budget.

Student Benefits

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will estimate the number of students on part-time and non-mandatory courses in further or higher education who will lose entitlement to housing benefit, income support and unemployment benefit as a result of current proposals to withdraw students' entitlement to those benefits.

Mr. Jackson: Part-time students will not be affected by the withdrawal of students' general entitlement to housing benefit, income support and unemployment benefit. Information is not available in the form requested about students on courses of further and higher education which do not attract mandatory awards.

National Curriculum Council

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his reply to the honourable Member for Truro of 21 May, *Official Report*, column *47*, what number and proportion of the practising teachers listed as members of National Curriculum Council committees are head teachers; what information is available to him regarding the current managerial and teaching responsibilities of such head teachers; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The number of head teachers and the proportion they make up of the practising teachers listed as members of the National Curriculum Council (NCC) committees are set out in the table. My right hon. Friend

does not have available to him any information about the current managerial and teaching responsibilities of these head teachers. The NCC is solely responsible for determining the membership of its committees.

Committee	*Practising Teachers (PT)*	*Head Teachers (HT)*	*Proportion of HT to PT*
			Per cent.
Whole Curriculum	3	3	100
National Curriculum A	5	4	80
National Curriculum B	4	2	50
Professional Development	3	2	67
Curriculum Review	2	2	100

Student Loans

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many representations he has now received about the student loan scheme.

Mr. Jackson: Since the publication of the White Paper on top-up loans for students we have received about 5,900 letters, including petitions. Of those, about 1,570 have been received since publication of the Education (Student Loans) Bill.

Local Management of Schools

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the representations he has received from school governing bodies regarding local management of schools.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend continues to receive representations from individual school governors and from school governing bodies. Many of these welcome the opportunities which delegated budgeting bring to them.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many teaching jobs have been lost in each local education authority because of the introduction of LMS.

Mrs. Rumbold: No such information is available. However, LMS does not change total resources for education; there is no evidence that the introduction of LMS will lead to any reduction in the number of teaching jobs.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list by local education authority the percentage of local management of schools spending which is incurred *(a)* by schools, *(b)* by central administration and *(c)* under other major headings.

Mrs. Rumbold: Budget information for 1990-91 is not yet available. However, some of the information the hon. Member has requested was included in LEAs' LMS schemes submitted to my right hon. Friend last autumn, on the basis of estimates and previous years' spending, and was published in the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) on 5 February, *Official Report*, column *451*.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of United Kingdom schools are currently under local management of schools; and what is his estimate for future years.

Mrs. Rumbold: Local management of schools is currently operating in England and Wales; it will be introduced in Northern Ireland from April 1991. Where a local education authority has a statutory LMS scheme, all the schools in the authority expect for the nursery and special schools fall within the scope of that scheme. At present 87 local education authorities in England and eight local education authorities in Wales have approved LMS schemes, and 81.8 per cent. of all schools in England and Wales are operating within those schemes. By April 1992 we expect all LEAs in England, including inner London, to have approved LMS schemes; 92.6 per cent. of all maintained schools in England and Wales will then be covered by schemes.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his estimate of the saving to be made in the first and subsequent years on salary costs under local management of schools by employing a newly qualified teacher as against *(a)* a teacher on average salary and *(b)* a teacher at the top of the scale salary.

Mrs. Rumbold: The majority of teachers are on the top of the standard scale. From 1 January 1991 such a teacher without an incentive allowance and outside London will receive £16,000. On that date a good honours graduate entering the profession will be entitled to be paid at least £10,500.

Mr Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will estimate the average school budget under local management of schools for the major types of school covered; and if he will show the percentage of that budget spent on the main expenditure headings.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information from which to make such an estimate is not yet available. According to the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy education statistics 1989-90 estimates, schools' direct costs (secondary and middle deemed secondary schools) break down as follows;

Teaching staff—63.8 per cent.
Non-Teaching Staff—5.7 per cent.
Premises—14.8 per cent.
Support Services—6.2 per cent
Other—9.5 per cent.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he has for improving the training of school governors in order to cope with local management of schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: In 1989-90 the Government supported, under the education support grant programme, expenditure of £4.9 million on governor training and £3 million on training support staff in schools, and, through the LEA training grants programme, £10 million to provide management training for heads and senior staff in schools. For the year 1990-91 the expenditure supported will be £5.1 million for governor training, £2 million for support staff training, and £8 million for head teacher training. Further support will be available in 1991-92. Local education authorities have a statutory duty to provide governors with such training as

the LEA considers necessary. It is for LEAs to determine the nature and timetable of their training programme. LEAs were required to state in their schemes for the local management of schools what arrangements they have made for support and training; the Department will be monitoring the use of ESG funds and the level of training provided.

Teacher Redundancies

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his estimate of the average cost of making a teacher redundant.

Mrs. Rumbold: This information is not available. Redundancy payments will depend on the age and length of relevant local government service of the teacher concerned and whether additional payments have been made under the Teachers (Compensation for Redundancy and Premature Retirement) Regulations 1989. A teacher aged 55 with 20 or more years' service would be entitled to a statutory redundancy payment of £4,968.

LEA Advisers and Inspectors

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what evidence he has of difficulties in recruiting and retaining suitable staff as local education authority advisers and inspectors.

Mrs. Rumbold: None.

Teachers' Salaries

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the full salary scale for teachers.

Mrs. Rumbold: The School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Order 1990, a draft of which is presently before Parliament, will give effect to the recommendations of the interim advisory committee on teachers' pay in 1990-91. When those recommendations are fully implemented, from 1 January 1991, teachers' salary scales will be as follows:

Standard scale (all qualified teachers other than heads and deputies)

Incremental point	*Salary*[1] *(£)*
1	9,000
2	9,501
3	10,002
4	10,503
5	11,004
6	11,754
7	12,504
8	13,254
9	14,004
10	15,003
11	16,002

Discretionary Inner London Pay Supplement—£750

Incentive allowances (available to qualified teachers other than heads and deputies)

Rate	*Amount (£)*
A	927
B	1,500
C	3,000
D	4,002
E	5,502

London Allowances (all teachers) from 1 July 1989

Rate	*Amount (£)*
Inner	1,500
Outer	984
Fringe	384

[1]The values of incremental points 1-10 can be enhanced by £249, £501, £750 or £999, subject to the value of the next point being reached, and local education authorities can introduce extended local scales up to a maximum of £18,000.

School group	*Head teachers*[1] *Range £*	*Deputy Heads*[2] *Range £*
1	18,900-21,900	18,300-19,800
2 1(S)	20,400-24,000	18,600-20,400
3 2(S)	222,500-26,802	19,200-21,3[illegible]
4 3(S)	25,200-30,600	20,400-23,400
5 4(S)	28,602-35,100	22,500-25,602
6	32,301-40,002	24,801-29,100

[1]A new system of range pay for heads and deputies will be introduced from 1 January 1991. Assimilation of existing heads and deputies onto the new salary structure will be dependent on their old spot salary. Thereafter the positioning of heads and deputies within the range applicable to their school will be determined by their local education authority or school governing body.

Nursery Places

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many nursery places are provided by *(a)* local authorities and other state bodies and *(b)* private organisations and charities for the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mrs. Rumbold: Information on the number of nursery places provided is not available centrally. The total number of pupils under five in maintained nursery schools, nursery classes in primary schools and independent schools in England in January 1989 was as follows:

	Number
Nursery schools	50,170
Nursery classes in Primary schools	245,414
Independent schools	41,175
Total	336,759

County Education Authorities

Sir David Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a list of the extra responsibilities placed on county education authorities in each of the past two years and his best estimate of the costs of compliance by county education authorities.

Mrs. Rumbold: New and amended responsibilities placed on education authorities are generally set out in departmental circulars and administrative memoranda. Those issued in 1988 and 1989 are listed in the table. The cost of complying with these responsibilities will vary depending on the circumstances of the authority and the extent of discretion over the timing and manner of implementation. The funding implications of new education developments are considered in the discussions between the Department and the local authority associations which inform the annual grant settlement. The Department provides support for the costs of the main

reforms in the Education Reform Act through its specific grant programmes. It is for each authority to decide what funds in addition to these grants it should allocate for new responsibilities from the overall resources available to it.

DES Circulars and Administrative Memoranda Issued in 1988 and 1989

Circulars

1/88 Physical and mental fitness to teach of teachers and entrants to initial teacher training.
2/88 Disabled Persons Act 1986.
3/88 School teachers pay and conditions of service.
4/88 Working together for the protection of children from abuse.
5/88 LEA Training Grants Scheme 1989-90.
6/88 Transfer of responsibility for education in inner London.
7/88 Education Reform Act 1988: Local Management of Schools.
8/88 Education Reform Act 1988: governance of maintained further education and higher education colleges.
9/88 Education Reform Act 1988: local management of FE and HE colleges: planning and delegation schemes and articles of government.
10/88 Education Reform Act 1988: Grant-Maintained Schools.
11/88 Admission of pupils to county and voluntary schools.
12/88 Protection of children: disclosure of criminal background of those with access to children.
1/89 Education Reform Act 1988: local arrangements for the consideration of complaints.
2/89 Education Reform Act 1988: charges for school activities.
3/89 Education Reform Act 1988: religious education and collective worship.
4/89 Alcohol misuse.
5/89 Education reform Act 1988: the school curriculum and assessment.
6/89 Education Reform Act 1988: National Curriculum—Maths and Science orders under Section 4.
7/89 Teachers (compensation for redundancy and premature retirement) regulations 1989.
8/89 Ethnically based statistics on school teachers.
9/89 Education Reform Act 1988: modern foreign languages in the National Curriculum.
10/89 Education Reform Act 1988: National Curriculum: English key stage 1 order under Section 4.
11/89 Education Reform Act 1988: statutory approval of qualifications under Section 5.
12/89 School teachers pay and conditions of employment.
13/89 Local management of schools, FE and HE colleges: order under Section 222 of the Education Reform Act 1988.
14/89 Education (school curriculum and related information) regulations 1989.
15/89 Education Reform Act 1988: temporary exceptions from the National Curriculum.
16/89 Ethnically-based statistics on school pupils.
17/89 Education (school records) regulations 1989.
18/89 Education (teachers) regulations 1989.
19/89 Adult continuing education and the Education Reform Act 1988: planning and delegation schemes.
20/89 LEA Training Grants Scheme 1990-91.
21/89 Grant-maintained schools: financial arrangements.
22/89 Assessments and statements of special educational needs: procedures within the education, health and social services.
23/89 Special schools for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties.
24/89 Initial teacher training: approval of courses.

Administrative Memoranda

1/88 Amendment of pupils' registration regulations 1956: keeping of school records.
1/89 Animals and plants in schools: legal aspects.

Schools (Northavon)

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools were closed in each of the past five years in the constituency of Northavon.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Information for parliamentary constituencies or other areas within education authorities is not available centrally.

Independent Schools (National Curriculum)

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many inquiries he has had from independent schools regarding the adoption of the national curriculum by them; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. Friend welcomes the interest shown by many individual independent schools, and by their representative bodies, in adopting the national curriculum. In response to this, he has arranged for the independent sector to receive copies of all national curriculum statutory orders and other national curriculum material.

Pupil-Teacher Ratios

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish the ratios of pupils to teachers in maintained schools in England for every year since 1984-85, excluding teachers on secondment or in training.

Mrs. Rumbold: The pupil-teacher ratio in maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools in England for each year since 1984-85 was as follows:

1984-85: 18·7
1985-86: 18·6
1986-87: 18·4
1987-88: 18·4
1988-89: 18·4

These ratios exclude teachers absent for long periods or seconded for other duties, but include any replacements. They also exclude student teachers, instructors and supply teachers.

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the number of dedicated energy managers in his Department and the number of person years devoted to energy management in the latest year.

Mrs. Rumbold: Eight officials across the Department have energy management responsibilities. In person years the total time they devote to these responsibilities has been set at 0.5 years. This level of commitment is broadly in line with the recommendations contained in the Audit Commission's guidelines of one central energy manager for every £1 million of annual bill.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the number of energy audits carried out in his Department in the last five years and for each audit a statement of its main conclusions.

Mrs. Rumbold: The PSA was responsible for undertaking energy audits on the Department's behalf until very recently. In the interim an energy audit has been conducted at both our London and Darlington headquarters buildings.

The London audit confirmed that it was possible to achieve energy savings by installing light and water control sensors, but that in view of an impending move to new premises, capital expenditure was not justified because insufficient payback time remains available.

The audit of our Darlington headquarters confirmed that useful savings could be achieved by fitting light control sensors and by installing power factor correction equipment to upgrade the electrical power supply at that site. Both these energy audit recommendations have been implemented.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give for each year from 1978 the energy consumption, broken down by fuel, of the buildings occupied by his Department, expressing the figures in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* 1978-79 money terms and *(c)* units of consumption for electricity in kilowatt hours, gas in therms, liquid fuel in litres and solid fuel in tonnes.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information sought is not held in the Department. The PSA was responsible for monitoring energy consumption on the Department's behalf until 30 March 1990.

Geography

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to make proposals for geography in the national curriculum.

Mr. MacGregor: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I are publishing our proposals for attainment targets and programmes of study for geography tomorrow. Our proposals are based on the recommendations of the geography working group, whose final report will be published with them. Copies of the proposals will be placed in the Library.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Disabled People (Benefits)

110.**Mr. Ashley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will review the operation of and procedures for medical assessments for benefits to disabled people.

Mr. Scott: We regularly monitor the operation of the current procedures and take action as appropriate. We are considering what changes are needed to these procedures for the new disability allowance. Our aim is that these should be helpful, and accessible to claimants.

Child Care and Family Services

Mr. Leighton: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what mechanisms his Department has to deal with services and policies on child care and family services.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 23 April 1990 at column *15*.

Widow's Pension

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he will give a full reply to the letter of 15 January from the hon. Member for Warwick and Leamington in connection with the widow's pension of Mrs. Joan Bains of Leamington Spa.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The issue raised by my hon. Friend is a complex one and I shall give him a full reply to his letter as soon as possible.

Disability Employment Credit

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether people in receipt of the income support or housing benefit disability premium before receiving the new disability employment credit, immediately requalify for their original benefits, if they subsequently chose to leave paid employment.

Mr. Scott: The detailed arrangements for the disability employment credit are under consideration. Our proposals are set out in chapter 5 of "The Way Ahead. Benefits for Disabled People" which we published on 10 January 1990.

Benefit Claimants

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will publish his latest estimates of the number of claimants for each of the main social security benefits, including community charge benefit;

(2) if he will publish his latest estimates of *(a)* the number of claimants receiving each of the main social security benefits including poll tax rebates and *(b)* the total number of individuals in receipt of one or more benefits.

Mr. Scott: The latest estimates of the average number of recipients for each of the main social security benefits are given in the public expenditure White Paper, Cm 1014, table 14.11, except for community charge benefit, where, in view of a level of charges higher than originally assumed, it is now estimated that numbers will be in excess of 8 million. Information is not held on the number of individuals in receipt of more than one benefit. The information requested at (b) is therefore not available.

Pensions

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what increase in contributions would be required in each of the next five years to build up the national insurance fund in order to be able to fund pensions for men payable from 60 years from that date.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The national insurance fund operates on a "pay as you go" basis, with current contribution income financing current benefit expenditure, rather than on the basis of accruing funds to meet possible future outgoings. The information is not therefore available in the form requested.

Income Support

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the *(a)* number of income support claimants, *(b)* number of partners and dependent children of income support claimants and *(c)* total on income support; and what was the percentage change in numbers of those on income support for each year since 1979.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information requested is in the table.

Income Support/Supplementary Benefit

(Thousands)

Year	Claimants (a)	Partners and dependent children (b)	(a+b) (c)	Percentage change in (c) since previous year (d)
1979	2,855	1,516	4,371	—
1980	3,118	1,745	4,863	11·3
1981	3,723	2,399	6,122	25·9
1982	4,267	2,803	7,070	15·5
1983	4,349	2,888	7,237	2·4
1984	4,609	3,119	7,728	6·8
1986[1]	4,938	3,353	8,291	7·3
1987	4,896	3,309	8,205	−1·0
1988	4,352	3,036	7,388	−10·0
1989	4,160	2,860	7,020	−5·0

[1] There was no Annual statistical inquiry in 1985: the one due in December that year was deferred until February 1986.

Sources:

1979-88 annual statistical inquiries.

1989 Provisional figures based on May quarterly statistical inquiry.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants moved off income support in April 1989 and April 1990 in consequence of the uprating of social security benefits.

Mrs Gillian Shephard: I regret that the information is not available.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will set out the real-terms value of supplementary benefit income support for *(a)* a young person aged 20 years and *(b)* a married couple over 25 years each year since 1979, on an index basis taking 1979 = 100.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The question is not sufficiently specific concerning the circumstances of the 20-year-old and married couple to allow a table to be drawn up.

Benefits (Blyth Valley)

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women were receiving invalidity benefit and severe disability allowance in Blyth Valley at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I regret that the information is not available in the precise form requested. The Blyth Valley constituency is served by the Department's local social security office at Blyth, but their boundaries are not conterminous. Nor does the local count of cases in action distinguish between men and women beneficiaries.

The table shows the numbers of people claiming sickness benefit, invalidity benefit and severe disablement allowance at Blyth local office as at 30 April 1990, the latest date for which information is available:

	Numbers
[1]Sickness/Invalidity Benefit	4,340
Severe Disablement Allowance	435

[1]The local office count of cases in action does not distinguish between Sickness and Invalidity Benefit.

Source: 100 per cent of cases in action. The figures quoted may include a number of cases not actually in receipt of benefit. Data are provisional and subject to amendment.

Community Charge

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what will be the effect of the community charge on the numbers of working people caught in the poverty trap.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The latest figures showing the distribution of marginal deduction rates are contained in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr Squire) on 5 April 1990 at column *790*. Earlier figures were published in table 14.19 of the "Government's Expenditure Plans 1990-91 to 1992-93" chapter 14 (Cm 1014). However, it is not possible to make meaningful comparisons in order to isolate the effect of the community charge owing to a number of changes which have occurred since the publication of table 14.19 and the fact that it would be necessary to speculate on what the level of general rates might have been had they remained in place.

Mr. Higgins: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of whether the income of those on income support is being reduced as a result of the introduction of the community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Everyone on income support is eligible for a maximum rebate of 80 per cent. of their community charge and income support levels were adjusted in April 1989 to provide help on an average basis towards the remaining 20 per cent. On average, therefore, the introduction of the community charge will have had a neutral effect on the incomes of those on income support.

Child Benefit

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the current levels of child benefit if it had been uprated since April 1979 in line with *(a)* the retail price index and *(b)* the single person's tax allowance; and what would be the net costs after allowing for benefit savings elsewhere in the system, of uprating it to those amounts now.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The levels would be *(a)* £8.66, *(b)* £10.32.

The net costs of uprating to these levels would be £660 million and £1,440 million respectively.

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, further to his reply to the right hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham, *Official Report,* 5 March, column 532, what would be the cost of restoring the combined 1979 value of child benefit plus long-term national insurance addition for children of widows, invalidity and retirement pensioners.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: It is estimated that the cost would be approximately £56.7 million.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the saving in public expenditure from the freezing of child benefit each year since 1987 and cumulatively, at current and 1990 prices.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The sums involved for each of the years are as follows:

Year	£ million
1988-89	140
1989-90	210
1990-91	285

On a cumulative basis this would be about £1,125 million in cash terms and £1,185 million at 1990-91 prices.

Over the same period the following extra help was channelled to the least well-off families—those in receipt of income support or family credit—who do not gain from an increase in child benefit:

Year	*£ million*
1988-89	200
1989-90	70
1990-91	70

The cumulative figures on the same basis as above would be around £800 million and £850 million respectively.

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much it would have cost his Department to increase child benefit by double the level of index in 1989-90.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: About £645 million.

Pensions (Incomes)

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), *Official Report*, 4 April, columns 687-92, if he will republish the figures in table 4 of the answer showing housing benefit, standard and certificated, separately from retirement pension.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information is not available in the precise form requested. The table shows housing benefit separately from retirement pension.

Incomes of Pensioner Tax Units with all income in State Benefits 1979-1987

	Average total net income	*RP+Supp. ben. plus housing benefit*	*Of which housing benefit*	*Other benefits (including disability benefits)*
Single				
1979	46.30	43.50	—	2.80
1980	47.80	45.40	—	2.40
1981	51.10	47.40	—	3.60
1982	53.50	50.70	—	2.80
1983	56.80	53.60	—	2.20
1984	57.10	53.50	12.40	3.60
1985	57.70	54.00	13.60	3.70
1986	57.00	53.60	14.90	3.40
1987	58.60	54.70	16.40	3.90
Married				
1979	72.80	69.50	—	3.50
1980	71.70	68.50	—	3.50
1981	78.50	75.80	—	2.70
1982	79.70	73.90	—	5.80
1983	82.30	78.20	—	4.10
1984	87.90	80.20	11.70	7.70
1985	84.20	77.10	10.70	7.10
1986	90.50	78.50	13.60	12.00
1987	88.40	78.60	15.50	9.90
All				
1979	50.60	47.70	—	2.90
1980	52.80	50.20	—	2.50
1981	56.00	52.60	—	3.50
1982	59.00	55.50	—	3.40
1983	61.10	58.50	—	2.50
1984	62.80	58.50	12.30	4.30
1985	62.10	57.80	13.10	4.20
1986	63.40	58.40	14.70	5.00
1987	64.40	59.30	16.30	5.00

Notes:
1. All cash figures are £ per week (to nearest 10 pence) at 1987 prices.
2. All figures refer to pensioner tax units.
3. Retirement pension and related benefits includes basic retirement pension, additional pension, income support and housing benefit.
4. In common with all other surveys, the Family Expenditure Survey draws information from a random sample of the population. This means that the FES will occasionally include some individuals whose weekly income are considerably higher or lower than those of the remainder of their group. The unrepresentative income of such individuals when averaged may give wide swings in year-to-year comparisons. In general when viewed over the longer term, the data provides a more reliable overall indication of the movement in average weekly incomes.
5. Prior to 1984 there is no information on a full year basis on standard and certified Housing Benefit.
6. For 1984-1987 the data from the FES is not sufficiently accurate to provide separate figures on the average amounts of certificated and standard Housing Benefit.

Social Fund

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much money in loans was given from the social fund in 1989-90.

Mr. Scott: Provisional loans expenditure in 1989-90 was £141 million.

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much money is available in the social fund for loans in 1990-91.

Mr. Scott: The loans budget for 1990-91 is £152 million.

Grants and Loans

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing in 1988-89 and 1989-90 the number of applications for (i) community care grants, (ii) budgeting loans and (iii) crisis loans that were refused, broken down by reason for refusal.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is set out in the tables. The figures relate to the number of occasions on which the particular reason for refusal was used. It is possible for an individual application to be refused for more than one reason.

Reasons for refusal 1989-90:

	Community Care Grants	*Budgeting Loans*	*Crisis Loans*
Savings over £500 sufficient to meet cost	3,510	880	30
Not in receipt of IS	n/a	38,720	n/a
Not in receipt of IS for 26 weeks	n/a	116,630	n/a
Not in receipt of IS and unlikely to become entitled	30,100	n/a	n/a
Excluded items	11,850	24,820	1,280
Excluded persons	19,790	1,300	390
Amount less than £30 (not travelling expenses)	4,520	12,460	n/a

	Community Care Grants	Budgeting Loans	Crisis Loans
Total debt of £1,000	n/a	420	40
Previous application and SFO decision for this item	13,480	25,540	1,500
No serious risk or damage to health or safety	n/a	n/a	24,540
Inability to repay	n/a	19,010	3,270
Help available from another source	2,440	2,330	3,940
Insufficient priority	50,340	137,720	1,300
Other agencies not providing back up	20	n/a	n/a
Suitable alternative available	1,360	2,080	1,490
Loan refused—CCG awarded	n/a	34,890	350
Direction 4 not satisfied[1]	58,210	n/a	n/a
Enough money available to meet crisis	n/a	n/a	520
Other[2]	97,400	21,210	6,990

Figures are rounded to the nearest 10.
[1]Figures relate to the period November 1989 to March 1990 only.
[2]Includes decisions prior to November 1989 where Direction 4 was not satisfied.
n/a—not applicable.

Reasons for refusal 1988-89

	Community care grants	Budgeting loans	Crisis loans
Savings over £500 sufficient to meet cost	2,510	880	60
Not in receipt of IS	n/a	35,780	n/a
Not in receipt of IS for 26 weeks	n/a	100,380	n/a
Not in receipt of IS and unlikely to become entitled	15,890	n/a	n/a
Excluded items	9,610	29,370	1,620
Excluded persons	13,790	770	320
Amount less than £30 (not travelling expenses)	3,230	11,950	n/a
Total debt of £1,000	n/a	180	20
Previous application and SFO decision for this item	5,080	13,180	1,490
No serious risk or damage to health or safety	n/a	n/a	24,430
Inability to repay	n/a	11,730	3,290
Help available from another source	2,140	2,460	5,890
Insufficient priority	13,450	83,430	810
Other agencies not providing back up	90	n/a	n/a
Suitable alternative available	1,180	2,140	1,860
Loan refused—CCG awarded	n/a	14,580	150
Other	83,220	18,770	6,590

Figures are rounded to the nearest 10.
n/a—not applicable.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a table showing in 1988-89 and 1989-90 the number of (i) community care grants, (ii) budgeting loans and (iii) crisis loans which were refused on the grounds of "excluded items", breaking down "excluded items" into its component parts.

Mr. Scott: The numbers of applications refused on the grounds that the application was for an item excluded by the Secretary of State's directions are as follows. Details of the individual excluded items applied for are not recorded.

	Community care grants	Budgeting loans	Crisis loans
1988-89	9,610	29,370	1,620
1989-90	11,850	24,820	1,280

Figures are rounded to the nearest 10.

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of *(a)* budgeting loans *(b)* crisis loans and *(c)* community care grants were awarded to each of the 15 client groups defined by his Department in *(a)* Great Britain as a whole *(b)* the north-east region and *(c)* each of the offices serving the Tyne and Wear area for 1989-90.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is in the table:

Analysis of awards 1989-90

Client Group Code	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15
Budgeting Loans																
National	0·2	0·4	0·6	3·5	0·4	1·6	4·2	48·7	0·4	1·8	15·7	18·3	1·1	3·0	0·0	n/a
North East Region	0·1	0·3	0·6	3·4	0·3	1·5	3·6	46·2	0·5	1·9	19·7	18·2	1·0	2·5	0·1	n/a
Gateshead	0·0	0·2	0·5	3·9	0·2	1·7	3·7	45·1	0·2	2·3	21·6	17·8	0·9	1·8	1·0	n/a
North Shields	0·0	0·5	0·6	3·9	0·3	1·5	4·8	48·5	0·8	1·7	16·6	17·1	0·8	2·8	0·0	n/a
Wallsend	0·0	0·7	0·5	3·3	0·4	1·7	3·6	46·2	0·2	1·3	21·0	18·2	0·9	1·8	0·0	n/a
Sunderland South	0·1	0·2	0·6	3·6	0·3	1·4	3·0	42·6	0·5	2·6	19·8	21·5	0·9	2·9	0·0	n/a
South Shields	0·3	0·1	1·1	4·2	0·2	0·8	4·0	47·5	0·7	1·7	16·3	19·7	0·6	2·2	0·0	n/a
Sunderland North	0·1	0·1	0·4	3·1	0·3	1·1	2·8	44·6	0·7	1·7	21·0	20·6	0·8	2·6	0·0	n/a
Newcastle St James	0·3	0·5	0·5	3·7	0·2	0·6	4·4	42·6	0·2	2·5	17·4	23·3	1·0	2·9	0·0	n/a
Jarrow	0·2	0·1	0·6	4·4	0·3	0·7	4·4	47·0	0·5	2·0	16·8	18·1	1·4	2·6	0·0	n/a
Newcastle West	0·1	0·7	1·1	4·9	0·4	1·0	4·9	56·9	0·6	0·7	22·1	3·6	0·5	2·3	0·0	n/a
Houghton le Spring	0·0	0·7	0·7	3·6	0·4	0·9	2·2	47·9	0·3	0·9	23·0	15·5	1·6	2·0	0·0	n/a
Newcastle East	0·1	0·1	0·6	1·8	0·5	1·5	3·3	47·4	0·2	2·4	15·9	23·3	1·0	1·8	0·0	n/a
Crisis loans																
National	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·8	0·1	0·4	1·7	21·7	0·1	0·2	14·8	44·0	1·1	4·4	0·0	10·4
North East Region	0·1	0·1	0·1	0·8	0·1	0·5	1·5	25·2	0·1	0·3	17·3	39·9	1·0	2·9	0·1	10·3
Gateshead	0·1	0·2	0·5	1·1	0·0	0·7	1·9	28·1	0·0	0·3	18·7	35·0	0·9	2·5	0·0	10·0
North Shields	0·0	0·1	0·0	1·3	0·1	0·1	1·5	28·6	0·0	0·1	21·2	38·3	1·3	2·8	0·0	4·4
Wallsend	0·0	0·3	0·0	1·0	0·5	0·7	2·2	23·1	0·0	0·2	17·2	38·0	0·7	3·1	0·0	12·9
Sunderland South	0·1	0·1	0·3	1·0	0·4	0·9	1·1	26·7	0·0	0·1	14·9	43·5	0·4	3·0	0·0	7·6
South Shields	0·0	0·1	0·1	0·6	0·2	0·4	1·9	22·0	0·1	0·2	12·6	48·7	0·6	3·7	0·1	8·8
Sunderland North	0·0	0·2	0·3	0·8	0·3	0·7	2·0	31·1	0·1	0·3	18·3	32·4	0·6	1·9	0·0	11·1

Client Group Code	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15
Newcastle St James	0·4	0·2	0·0	0·9	0·0	0·7	1·8	27·0	0·0	0·4	16·7	35·6	1·0	3·9	0·0	11·4
Jarrow	0·1	0·1	0·0	0·5	0·3	0·8	2·3	24·7	0·0	0·3	11·8	40·6	1·3	2·9	0·0	14·3
Newcastle West	0·0	0·2	0·2	1·3	0·0	0·6	1·3	18·8	0·0	0·3	13·7	24·6	0·8	2·3	0·0	35·7
Houghton le Spring	0·0	0·0	0·3	0·3	0·2	0·3	2·0	22·5	0·0	0·0	17·6	32·1	1·4	3·0	0·0	20·3
Newcastle East	0·0	0·2	0·2	1·4	0·1	0·3	1·0	26·3	0·0	0·4	12·7	44·5	1·0	2·1	0·0	9·9
Community care grants																
National	0·4	5·6	5·1	15·1	0·9	3·3	12·6	25·4	0·4	1·1	8·5	12·9	2·1	5·9	0·0	1·0
North East Region	0·2	4·7	5·3	15·1	0·9	3·6	11·9	25·6	0·4	1·2	10·2	12·8	2·1	5·0	0·1	0·9
Gateshead	0·0	4·1	7·0	14·3	1·1	2·8	11·8	28·8	0·4	1·0	8·2	14·0	1·6	4·1	0·0	0·8
North Shields	0·0	5·0	5·3	17·1	0·4	4·4	11·2	27·7	0·4	0·0	9·0	14·7	0·7	3·3	0·0	0·9
Wallsend	0·2	7·7	7·7	19·8	0·0	1·8	10·5	21·4	0·2	1·0	8·9	13·9	1·8	4·6	0·0	0·4
Sunderland South	0·1	5·1	4·9	15·9	2·0	4·4	14·4	24·3	0·5	1·3	8·4	10·4	2·1	5·4	0·0	0·8
South Shields	0·1	6·0	4·6	19·2	1·3	2·7	10·8	33·6	1·0	0·9	7·6	6·9	1·2	3·1	0·0	0·7
Sunderland North	0·2	3·0	5·4	12·4	1·8	4·0	10·7	26·6	0·3	1·8	10·8	16·5	1·4	4·6	0·0	0·5
Newcastle St James	0·4	4·3	3·0	14·3	0·4	2·6	12·3	26·3	0·0	1·1	7·8	16·6	1·6	8·1	0·0	1·1
Jarrow	0·0	4·8	8·5	23·1	0·4	4·2	14·9	21·8	0·1	1·5	7·2	4·5	3·3	5·1	0·0	0·6
Newcastle West	0·4	7·6	7·3	16·3	0·3	1·5	13·6	24·3	0·0	1·4	10·7	7·9	1·5	6·0	0·0	1·1
Houghton le Spring	0·2	2·5	2·0	8·0	0·7	2·7	14·5	29·4	0·5	1·2	19·7	10·5	2·0	5·2	0·0	0·7
Newcastle East	0·2	10·4	9·7	30·5	1·5	2·8	13·6	10·9	0·4	0·8	3·9	8·7	0·7	5·3	0·0	0·6

n/a = not applicable
Key to client group codes:
00 Not assigned
01 Over 80 and in receipt of Higher Pensioner Premium
02 Aged 60-79, disabled and in receipt of Higher Pensioner Premium
03 Aged 60-79, in receipt of Pensioner Premium or over 60 without Pensioner Premium
04 Lone Parent, in receipt of Disability Premium
05 Family, in receipt of Disability Premium
06 Other, in receipt of Disability Premium
07 Lone Parent, not in receipt of Disability Premium
08 Quarterly signer at UBO, in receipt of Family Premium
09 Quarterly signer at UBO, not in receipt of Family Premium
10 Signing as unemployed or with training allowance—in receipt of Family Premium
11 Signing as unemployed or with training allowance—not in receipt of Family Premium
12 Others, in receipt of Family Premium
13 Others, not in receipt of Family Premium
14 Involved in a trade dispute
15 Applicant not in receipt of Income Support

Mr. Terry Davis: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of *(a)* budgetary loans and *(b)* community care grants were awarded to each of the 15 client groups defined by his Department for the midlands region in the financial year 1989-90.

Mr. Scott *[holding answer 24 May 1990]*: The information requested is set out in the table.

Client Group	Budgeting Loans Per cent.	Community Care Grants Per cent.
0	0·13	0·19
1	0·42	4·69
2	0·51	4·23
3	3·45	12·39
4	0·32	0·78
5	1·84	2·82
6	2·96	10·30
7	50·17	35·64
8	0·57	0·26
9	1·53	0·63
10	20·06	7·08
11	14·57	13·23
12	1·14	1·79
13	2·17	5·06
14	0·00	0·00
15	n/a	0·93

The figures do not sum because of rounding.
Key to Client Groups
0 Unallocated or unidentified
1 Over 80-with Income Support higher pensioner priemium.
2 Aged 60-79—disabled with higher pensioner premium.
3 Aged 60-79—with ordinary pensioner premium or over 60 without pensioner premium.
4 Lone parent with Income Support disability premium.
5 Family with disability premium.
6 Other with disability premium.
7 Lone parent without disability premium.
8 Signs at UBO quarterly with Income Support family premium.
9 Signs at UBO quarterly without family premium.
10 Signing unemployed or with training allowance with family premium.
11 Signing unemployed or with training allowance without family premium.
12 Others with family premium.
13 Others without family premium.
14 Involved in trade dispute.
15 Applicant not in receipt of Income Support—Not applicable for budgeting loans.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the expenditure on earnings-related unemployment benefit each year since 1975, at current and at 1990 prices; and what is the estimated saving in public expenditure from the abolition of earnings-related unemployment benefit each year since 1982 and cumulatively, at current and at 1990 prices.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Expenditure on earnings-related unemployment benefit from 1975 to 1982 is shown in the table.

£ million

	Original price	1990-91 price
1975-76	73	247
1976-77	87	254
1977-78	92	248
1978-79	90	214
1979-80	85	171

	Original price	1990-91 price
1980-81	170	306
1981-82	176	292

Information on the expenditure saving from the abolition of earnings-related unemployment benefit each year since 1982 is not available. In 1982 it was estimated that the public expenditure saving in the first full year from the abolition of earnings-related unemployment benefit was around £100 million at 1982-83 prices; this converts to about £150 million at 1990-91 prices. Following recent research into the work history of the newly unemployed, it is now estimated that if earnings-related unemployment benefit were to be reintroduced the gross cost would be around £200 million in the current financial year. There would be an offsetting saving of about £50 million on income support.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many councils in England and Wales are not taking war pensions into account when assessing housing benefit claims; and if he will put a list of these in the Library.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) on 14 December 1989 at columns *758-62*.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what was the total number of applications for attendance allowance received in the United Kingdom in each year since 1980;

(2) how many applications for attendance allowance were refused in each year since 1980;

(3) how many applications for attendance allowance were granted *(a)* at the higher and *(b)* at the lower rate in each year since 1980.

Mr. Scott: The details requested for Great Britain are in the table.

Year	Initial Claims Received	Awards and Rate Higher	Lower	Rejections
1980	147,367	38,796	60,527	39,613
1981	166,572	42,526	65,493	40,608
1982	193,457	53,981	81,550	45,985
1983	233,480	61,166	98,325	57,816
1984	257,747	67,445	114,325	58,004
1985	277,017	66,218	118,381	70,526
1986	286,889	61,457	112,607	76,497
1987	319,667	78,338	130,355	91,888
1988	361,720	74,058	133,795	110,527
1989	365,219	83,647	145,095	100,973

Some claims are withdrawn before decision and some are decided in a different year from that in which they are made.

Security Screens (Benefit Offices)

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his policy on the use of security screens in benefit offices.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Security screens are installed at reception points and in interview rooms of local social security offices where it is considered appropriate.

Students

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total saving to public expenditure expected in respect of the proposed withdrawal of students' entitlement to (i) housing benefit, (ii) unemployment benefit and (iii) income support in this and the next financial year.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Government's proposal is to withdraw housing benefit, unemployment benefit and income support entitlement from full-time students from the start of the 1990-91 academic year. The reduction in public expenditure from these benefit changes in the current financial year is estimated at £29 million. This reduction arises from housing benefit only, since students are not currently eligible for unemployment benefit during term time and the short vacations. Similarly, the vast majority of full-time students are ineligible for income support other than in the long summer vacation. In the next financial year reductions in public expenditure are estimated to be £51 million from housing benefit and £28 million from income support and unemployment benefit. It is not possible to provide a disaggregated figure for unemployment benefit as separate details of claims are not kept.

The reduction in public expenditure arising from these benefits changes will be more than offset by a total of over £200 million which is being made available in the next academic year through the student loans scheme and access funds.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the total numbers of students currently in receipt of (i) housing benefit, (ii) income support during the long vacation and (iii) unemployment benefit during the long vacation.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Provisional quarterly figures for February 1990 indicate that around 90,000 students were in receipt of housing benefit at that time. This figure includes those receiving rate rebate only as well as those receiving rent allowance and rent rebate. The number of students receiving rent allowances or rent rebates can be separately identified only from the annual one in 100 sample of cases. Figures for May 1989 should be available shortly. A special exercise conducted in DSS local offices in the 1989 summer vacation identified 135,000 student claims for income support lasting, on average, six weeks.

I regret that information on the numbers of students receiving unemployment benefit is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what information his Department collects on the numbers of students claiming housing benefit, unemployment benefit and income support.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Information on the number of students claiming housing benefit is obtained from a quarterly count of cases by local authorities and from the annual one in 100 sample of case details.

Details of the numbers of students registered as unemployed are collected on a monthly basis and

published in the *Employment Gazette*. It is not, however, possible to differentiate between those claiming unemployment benefit and those claiming income support.

A special exercise was mounted in the 1989 summer vacation to provide details of student claims to income support, including numbers claiming, duration of claim and amount of benefit paid.

Incomes (Yorkshire)

Mr. Patchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people in Yorkshire are on less than half the average income; how many are below average incomes; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Government do not publish statistics on living standards disaggregated on a regional basis. However, a recent publication by the Social Services Select Committee contains results of an analysis carried out by the Institute for Fiscal Studies. Copies of the publication—"Households and Families Below Average Income: a Regional Analysis"—are available in the Library.

Allowances (Clydebank and Milngavie)

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people in Clydebank and Milngavie, or in the administrative units approximating to this area for which the information is available, are in receipt of *(a)* invalid care allowance, *(b)* attendance allowance and (c) severe disablement allowance.

Mr. Scott: I regret that details of the numbers of people in Clydebank and Milngavie receiving *(a)* invalid care allowance and *(b)* attendance allowance are not available.

As at 30 April 1990, the latest date for which the information is held, the numbers of people receiving severe disablement allowance from the Department's local social security offices at Clydebank and Glasgow (Maryhill) which serve the Clydebank and Milngavie constituency, although their boundaries are not conterminous, were:

	Numbers
Clydebank	334
Glasgow (Maryhill)	277

Source: 100 per cent. count of cases in action. The figures quoted may include a small number of cases not actually in receipt of benefit. Data are provisional and subject to amendment.

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the number of dedicated energy managers in his Department and the number of person-years devoted to energy management in the latest year.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: In the financial year 1989-90 the division of the administration of the Department of Health and Social Security was not complete, and the following information reflects the position for both Departments.

There is one dedicated energy manager and each accommodation manager has a proportion of his time allocated for energy management. As information about the latter is not readily available it is not possible to calculate the total number of person years devoted to energy management.

Benefit Payments

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many times, in each of the latest years for which information is available, the provision to make payments to another person on the beneficiary's behalf under regulation 34 of S.I. No. 1968, 1987 has been *(a)* used and *(b)* used to pay benefit to the partner of a claimant.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost as no record is kept of the number of cases in which regulation 34 of SI 1987/1968 (the Social Security (Claims on Payments) Regulations 1987) is used to make payments to another person on the beneficiary's behalf.

National Insurance

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what has been the end-of-year surplus/deficit on the national insurance fund in each year since 1979; and what has been the income and outgoings from the fund in each of these years.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information for the years up to and including 1988-89 is in the table. Final figures for 1989-90 are not yet available.

£ billions

Year	*Income*	*Expenditure*	*Surplus/ deficit*
1979-80	13·30	12·76	+0·54
1980-81	16·01	15·60	+0·41
1981-82	17·06	18·05	−0·99
1982-83	19.39	19·42	−0·03
1983-84	21·09	20·51	+0·58
1984-85	22·12	21·74	+0·38
1985-86	23·50	23·18	+0·32
1986-87	25·34	24·93	+0·41
1987-88	27·34	25·76	+1·58
1988-89	29·82	26·74	+3·08

Child Maintenance

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will place a copy in the Library of the new instructions to local offices on *(a)* assessing absent parents' ability to pay maintenance and *(b)* interviewing lone parents about the identity of the absent father.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Local office instructions covering the assessment of benefit and the related adjudication guidance from the office of the chief adjudication officer are published. However, it is not our practice to publish local office operational instructions because to do so would risk increased and unnecessary abuse of the benefits system.

Public Appointments

Mr. Grocott: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the full-time and part-time public appointments for which he is responsible, together with the salary and the date when each appointment is due for renewal.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 23 May 1990]:* Details of some of the full-time and part-time public

appointments for which the Secretary of State for Social Security is responsible can be obtained from the Cabinet Office publication "Public Bodies 1989". A copy is in the Library. Details of salaries and fees can be obtained from the same source.

The dates on which all these appointments are due for renewal are not recorded centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The readily available information is in the table.

Name of Body	*Appointment Renewal Dates*
Attendance Allowance Board	2 due during 1980 4 due during 1991 4 due during 1992
Central Advisory Committee on War Pensions	11 due during 1990 6 due during 1991 7 due during 1992 2 due during 1993
Industrial Injuries Advisory Council	8 due during 1990 1 due during 1991 8 due during 1992
Social Security Advisory Committee	3 due during 1990 3 due during 1991 6 due during 1992 2 due during 1993
Occupational Pensions Board	6 due during 1990 2 due during 1991 5 due during 1992

In addition, the Secretary of State is responsible for the following appointments:

Independent Living Fund. Five appointments, which are due for renewal in 1993. No salaries or fees paid.

Social Fund Commissioner. One appointment, which is due for renewal during 1990. Salary is £15,758.

Pension Age

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received concerning equal state pension age; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We have received a total of 119 representations in the year to 27 April 1990.

National Insurance Contributions

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list those categories of workers who pay National Insurance contributions as both employers and employees; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: We are not aware of any circumstances in which an individual will be liable for both employer's and employee's contributions in respect of the same occupation.

Medical Appeal Tribunals

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many female chairmen of medical appeal tribunals in Scotland there are.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The administration of medical appeal tribunals is the responsibility of the president of the social security and medical appeal tribunals, His Honour Judge Holden. His office advises that there are no female chairmen of medical tribunals in Scotland.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many female medical practitioner members of medical appeal tribunals in Scotland there are.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The administration of medical appeal tribunals is the responsibility of the president of the social security and medical appeal tribunals, His Honour Judge Holden. His office advises that there are two female medical practitioner members of medical appeal tribunals in Scotland.

HEALTH

Family Doctor Service

14. **Mr. Hanley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on funding for the family doctor service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We will spend almost £1,800 million this year on the family doctor service, 77 per cent. more in real terms than in 1979-80.

Social Work Training

15. **Mr. Orme:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will bring forward proposals to improve basic social work training.

19. **Mr. Home Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will bring forward proposals to improve basic social work training.

90. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will bring forward proposals to improve basic social work training.

102. **Mr Cummings:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will bring forward proposals to improve basic social work training.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Government have accepted the need to improve training for social workers and other social care staff. We are therefore implementing a balanced programme of improvements to provide a comprehensive, progressive continuum of education, training and qualifications for all social work and care staff in the personal social services.

For social work qualifying training this includes the provision of additional funding for phasing out one-year post-graduate courses in favour of a minimum of two years' training, improvement to the quality and quantity of practice placements and improvements to course curricula. We are also making additional funds available to the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work to introduce a new qualifying course at higher education level, the diploma in social work, which will replace the existing qualifying courses over time. This new award, developed in consultation with educational, employment and professional interests, represents a radically improved approach to qualifying training for social workers which will enable students to acquire the knowledge, skills and values required for competent practice as a social worker.

Community Care

17. **Mr. Clelland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current time scale for implementation of proposals on community care.

20. **Mr. Ronnie Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his current timescale for implementation of proposals on community care.

Mr Kenneth Clarke: The implementation of the community care proposals is timetabled for 1 April 1991.

77. **Mr. Clay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current time scale for implementation of proposals on community care.

108. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current time scale for implementation of proposals on community care.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The implementation of the community care proposals is timetabled for 1 April 1991.

61. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what changes he is proposing to make in the procedures governing the release into the community of mentally ill and other patients; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: On 14 May I announced that the Government were formally consulting on the introduction of the care programme approach for people with a serious mental illness. We propose that all district health authorities should introduce this approach from next April. It will cover all psychiatric patients discharged from hospital and should help ensure that they receive the community care they need.

45. **Mr. Bidwell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on earmarked grants to local authorities for the purpose of community care.

Mr. Battle: To ask Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on earmarked grants to local authorities for the purpose of community care.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave the hon. Members for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) and for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) earlier today.

30. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he next expects to meet the Association of Directors of Social Services to discuss community care.

53. **Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he next expects to meet the Association of Directors of Social Services to discuss community care.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) earlier today.

National Health Service Funding

18. **Mr. John Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he next expects to meet the National Association of Health Authorities to discuss its concerns regarding the funding of the National Health Service.

28. **Mr. Lambie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he next expects to meet the National Association of Health Authorities to discuss its concerns regarding the funding of the National Health Service.

67. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he next expects to meet the National Association of Health Authorities to discuss its concerns regarding the funding of the National Health Service.

98. **Mr. James Lamond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he next expects to meet the National Association of Health Authorities to discuss its concerns regarding the funding of the National Health Service.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I and ministerial colleagues have fairly frequent contacts with the National Association of Health Authorities. Later this month I shall be attending its annual conference.

94. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last met the TUC general council to discuss National Health Service funding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The TUC general council has made no request for any meeting with me. I met the health service committee of the TUC on 28 July 1989 and discussed funding and other issues. I plan to meet it again on 19 July for similar discussions.

Eye Tests

21. **Mr. Wall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he now expects to announce the results of his Department's survey of eye tests.

51. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he now expects to announce the results of his Department's survey of eye tests.

55. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he now expects to announce the results of his Department's survey of eye tests.

65. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he now expects to announce the results of his Department's survey of eye tests.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: A report of the NOP findings on sight tests will be available shortly.

75. **Mr. Henderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will bring forward proposals to remove charges for eyesight checks.

96. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Secretary of State for health if he will bring forward proposals to remove charges for eyesight checks.

107. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will bring forward proposals to remove charges for eyesight checks.

109. **Mr Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will bring forward proposals to remove charges for eyesight checks.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Vulnerable groups such as children, those on low incomes and people with certain special medical needs continue to be entitled to free NHS sight tests. There are no plans to make this a universal entitlement.

Westminster and Chelsea Hospital

22. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the revised estimate of the cost of the proposed Westminster and Chelsea hospital.

Mr. Dorrell: The estimated cost of the Westminster and Chelsea hospital is approximately £203 million. This figure

is based on the estimated construction cost of around £178 million plus equipment and fees. The estimates take account of expected inflation over the period of the contract which is due for completion in mid-1992.

National Health Service Trusts

23. **Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has as to how many ballots of staff and patients on the question of the formation of self-governing trusts have resulted in majorities in favour.

74. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has as to how many ballots of staff and patients on the question of the formation of self-governing trusts have resulted in majorities in favour.

91. **Mr. Cunliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has as to how many ballots of staff and patients on the question of the formation of self-governing trusts have resulted in majorities in favour.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We are aware that ballots on the establishment of National Health Service trusts have taken place in a number of units. However, we have consistently made clear that it would not be sensible for changes in management of National Health Service services to be subject to ballots. Applications for National Health Service trust status will not be invited until Parliament has approved the necessary legislation. Staff and the local community will then have an opportunity to express their views on individual proposals before any decisions are made.

27. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on the number of ballots that have been held in hospitals which are considering opting out; and whether any of these have shown a majority in favour of such a course of action.

32. **Mr. McLeish:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence he has of the views of National Health Service staff or patients for the formation of self-governing trusts.

37. **Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on the number of ballots that have been held on hospitals which are considering opting out; and whether any of these have shown a majority in favour of such a course of action.

54. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence he has of the views of National Health Service staff or patients for the formation of self-governing trusts.

103. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on the number of ballots that have been held in hospitals which are considering opting out; and whether any of these have shown a majority in favour of such a course of action.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Members to the reply my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State gave the hon. Members for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) and for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) earlier today.

38. **Mr Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the latest estimate of his Department's expenditure on preparation for the formation of self-governing trusts.

76. **Ms. Short:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the latest estimate of his Department's expenditure on preparation for the formation of self-governing trusts.

97. **Mr John P. Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the latest estimate of his Department's expenditure on preparation for the formulation of self-governing trusts.

100. **Mr Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the latest estimate of his Department's expenditure on preparation for the formulation of self-governing trusts.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Expenditure on preparing for the establishment of National Health Service trusts is not separately identified.

Dental Checks

24. **Mr. Rogers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will now remove the charge on dental checks.

59. **Mr. McWilliam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will now remove the charge on dental checks.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave to the right hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees) and the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton) earlier today.

Hip Replacements

25. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current waiting time for hip replacement operations; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The latest information held centrally about waiting times by operation is for 1985 and is published in "1985 Hospital in-patient enquiry main tables for England series number MB4 No. 27", a copy of which is available in the Library. Information on waiting times in 1988-89 for specific types of operation is expected to be available shortly.

National Health Service (Inflation)

26. **Mr. Caborn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the inflation figure for the Health Service over the next 12 months.

41. **Mr. Boyes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the inflation figure for the Health Service over the next 12 months.

47. **Mr. Buckley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the inflation figure for the Health Service over the next 12 months.

66. **Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his next estimate of the inflation figure for the Health Service over the next 12 months.

Mr. Dorrell: The Government do not make estimates of inflation in the National Health Service before the end of the financial year concerned.

Ambulance Services

29. **Mr. Nellist:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans he has to safeguard the provision of the out-patient ambulance service; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Responsibility for providing patient transport services will continue to lie with health authorities.

Maternity Services

31. **Mr. Terry Fields:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action his Department is taking following the publication of the National Audit Office report on maternity services.

44. **Ms. Gordon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action his Department is taking following the publication of the National Audit Office report on maternity services.

48. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action his Department is taking following the publication of the National Audit Office report on maternity services.

80. **Mr. Flannery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action his Department is taking following the publication of the National Audit Office report on maternity services.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The National Audit Office reported that, despite the halving of infant mortality rates between 1985 and 1987, there remained wide-ranging geographical variations in the incidence of infant mortality. Last July, in the Government reply to the first report from the Social Services Committee (Session 1988-89) on "Perinatal, Neonatal and Infant Mortality" (Cm 741), we announced a major new initiative to address this problem. The National Audit Office endorsed our approach and we are taking its findings into account in its implementation.

Figures just published by the Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys in its weekly monitor bulletin of 16 May, a copy of which is available in the Library, show that the decline in infant mortality continued in 1989 and rates are now lower than in any previous year.

General Practitioner Practices (Staff)

33. **Dr. Woodcock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of practice staff in the average general practitioner service practice.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The average number of practice staff per partnership qualifying for direct reimbursement was 6·3 (3·7 whole-time equivalents) in 1988, the latest year for which figures are available.

Wessex Regional Health Authority

34. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last met the chairman of Wessex regional health authority.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State last met Mr. Buchanan at his meeting with regional chairmen on 16 May.

Preventive Medicine

35. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent additional preventive medicine initiatives have been mounted by his Department.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply my hon. Friend the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State gave my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn, Hatfield (Mr. Evans) on 23 January at column *670*. Additional preventive medicine initiatives mounted by the Department since 23 January include:

(a) support for a wide range of programmes to prevent the spread of HIV infection through local authorities and health authorities, voluntary bodies and the Health Education Authority, whose latest mass media campaign was launched on 14 February 1990.

(b) the launch of the latest national drug publicity campaign in February at a cost of £3·8 million. Its aim is to maintain the current level of awareness about the dangers of drug misuse among young people. Complementary regional campaigns are being run in Yorkshire, Mersey and West Midlands.

(c) the funding by the Department, through the Health Education Authority, of the appointment of regional alcohol misuse co-ordinators in each of the 14 health regions. Their tasks include encouraging all the relevant agencies within their regions to co-operate in ensuring that help is available for people who misuse alcohol or are at risk of doing so, and in promulgating the importance of drinking sensibly. National Drinkwise Day on 12 June will provide a focus for health education about the dangers of alcohol misuse.

(d) as part of the "Look After Your Heart" programme a national fitness survey, jointly sponsored by the Department of Health, the Health Education Authority, and the Sports Council in conjunction with Allied Dunbar, was launched on 20 February 1990 to measure the nation's fitness. This entails the study of at least 6,000 adults of all ages to explore the relationship between exercise, fitness and health.

(e) as a further contribution to the "Look After Your Heart" programme, the national Heartbeat Award scheme was launched on 26 April 1990. This award is intended to encourage caterers to play an active role in reducing coronary heart disease by promoting healthy food choices, smoke-free areas and good standards of food hygiene. The award is endorsed and implemented by the Institute of Environmental Health Officers.

(f) together with the Health Education Authority and regional health authorities, 28 regional "Look After Your Heart" officers are in the process of being appointed and

(g) the preparation, with the Health Education Authority, of a further phase of a major education campaign on vaccination and immunisation due to be launched in September 1990. This has already been piloted in the north-west region.

National Health Service, North Debyshire

36. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will meet a delegation of North Derbyshire health authority members to discuss cuts in the National Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Members of North Derbyshire health authority should discuss any concerns they have with the chairman of the Trent regional health authority which is the body responsible for allocating North Derbyshire's resources. National Health Service funding has risen to £29·1 billion this year and is well ahead of inflation on any measure; North Derbyshire's budget of £64·1 million represents an increase of nearly 3 per cent. over last year.

Out-patient Departments

39. **Mr. Gale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether any initiatives are being taken to improve out-patient departments.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The following initiatives have been taken by the Department to improve out-patient departments:

i. *Out-patient Demonstration Projects—Aims*

As part of the Government's drive to raise quality standards in hospitals, the Department is supporting six demonstration projects in out-patient departments at a total cost of £750,000. The aim is to improve the quality of services and make them more responsive to the needs of consumers by providing care in pleasant physical surroundings with better facilities, clear information to patients and effective appointment systems. The first results will be disseminated as good practice advice to the health service later this year.

ii *Demonstration Projects to be Funded 1990-91*

Some five more projects are likely to be funded in 1990-91. Health authorities and units will be informed in June 1990 which projects have been selected.

iii. *Waiting Times in Out-patients*

A report issued in December 1989 on "Reducing Waiting Time in Out-patient Departments' is now being followed up by development of a visual simulation package to assist NHS out-patient departments in planning efficient appointment systems.

iv. *Role of Nurses and other Non-Medical Staff in Out-patients*

A departmental study report on "The Role of Nurses and other Non-Medical Staff in Out-patient Departments" was issued to health authorities in March 1990. The report contains proposals for changing the skill mix of qualified and non-qualified staff better to reflect the nature of tasks undertaken and to make the best use of available resources.

GP Contracts

40. **Mr. Favell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has received any representations claiming that patients are being removed from doctors' lists as a result of the new general practitioners' contract.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have received a number of such representations and I have had the facts investigated wherever possible. None of these cases has proved to result from the GPs' new contract and some well-reported complaints have proved to be quite inaccurate. As I have repeatedly said, it is dishonest and unprofessional for GPs to suggest that the Government's new contract justifies the removal of any patient from a practice list.

43. **Mr. Brandon-Bravo:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the effect of the new general practitioners' contract on the family doctor service.

49. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the operation of the new general practitioner contracts.

69. **Mr Charles Wardle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the effect on service to patients of the new general practitioners' contract.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friends and the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State gave the hon. Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Lambie) on 1 May at columns *517-18*.

General Practitioners (Expenditure)

Mr Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the level of his Department's funding, in cash and constant prices, of expenditure by general practitioners on practice staff and premises in each year since 1979.

Mr Kenneth Clarke: The information requested is in the following table and shows that annual public expenditure on these items has almost trebled in real terms over the period.

Expenditure by FPCs (England): 1979-80—1990-91 Practice Staff and Premises

	In Cash £million			*At 1990-91 Prices*[1] *£million*		
Year	*Staff*	*Premises*	*Total*	*Staff*	*Premises*	*Total*
1979-80[2]	50·927	20·408	71·335	108·704	43·561	152·265
1980-81	65·063	26·696	91·759	117·354	48·152	165·506
1981-82	78·769	32·319	111·088	129·410	53·097	182·507
1982-83	89·480	39·141	128·621	137·101	59·972	197·073
1983-84	102·721	47·489	150·210	150·373	69·519	219·892
1984-85	114·632	54·481	169·113	159·866	75·979	235·845
1985-86	134·028	67·030	201·058	177·399	88·721	266·120
1986-87	143·838	74·535	218·373	184·127	95·412	279·539
1987-88	166·798	83·726	250·524	202·660	101·727	304·387
1988-89	200·508	96·396	296·904	227·416	109·332	336·748
1989-90[3]	242·099	121·940	364·039	257·835	129·866	387·701
1990-91[4]	261·072	165·032	426·104	261·072	165·032	426·104
Total	1,649·935	829·193	2,479·128	2,113·317	1,040·370	3,153·687

[1] Delated using GDP Deflator.

[2] Figures for 1979-80 to 1988-89 are taken from Summarised Accounts (England), and show direct reimbursement of 70 per cent. of the cost of practice staff, direct reimbursement of rent and rates and improvement grants. The rest of the cost of practice staff is reimbursed indirectly through GPs' fees and allowances.

[3] 1989-90 figures are on a similar basis but show provisional out-turn.

[4] 1990-91 figures are preliminary allocations for cash limited expenditure on direct reimbursement of practice staff costs, cost rents and improvement grants and estimated non cash limited expenditure on other rent and rates.

Family Planning

42. **Ms. Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals he has for the improvement of family planning services.

46. **Mr. David Young:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals he has for the improvement of family planning services.

85. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals he has for the improvement of family planning services.

86. **Mr. Doran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals he has for the improvement of family planning services.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The day-to-day management of family planning services is a matter for individual health authorities since they can best judge local circumstances and priorities. The Government continue to regard family planning as an important preventive service and guidance issued by the Department of Health makes it clear that health authorities should ensure that full use is made of family planning services, and that a proper balance is struck between services provided by specialist clinics and those provided by GPs.

Community Health Councils

50. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the future of community health councils.

73. **Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on the future of community health councils.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) earlier today.

Hospital Appointments

52. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average waiting time for a hospital appointment; and what was the figure 12 months ago.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not collected centrally.

NHS (Maintenance)

56. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his latest estimate of the cumulative backlog of maintenance for the National Health Service.

63. **Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his latest estimate of the cumulative backlog of maintenance for the National Health Service.

64. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his latest estimate of the cumulative backlog of maintenance for the National Health Service.

89. **Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his latest estimate of the cumulative backlog of maintenance for the National Health Service.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Members to the reply my hon. Friend, the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, gave the hon. Members for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) and for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe) on 23 January at column *656*.

Needle Exchange Schemes

57. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on his policy towards the establishment of needle exchange schemes to reduce the spread of HIV among injecting drug misusers.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We issued guidance to health authorities in September 1988 on establishing syringe exchange schemes. We estimate that there are currently some 120 schemes in England and schemes are now starting in Wales. Selected schemes continue to be monitored. Overall, our aim is to determine their effectiveness in changing drug misusers' behaviour away from practices which carry a risk of acquiring or transmitting HIV infection.

King's College Hospital

58. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether King's College hospital has expressed interest in becoming a self-governing hospital trust.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Yes.

Bury DHA

60. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what additional resources have been made available to Bury district health authority for 1990-91.

Mr. Dorrell: In 1990-91 additional cash resources will be made available by the North Western regional health authority to Bury health authority amounting to £2,723,200 which represents an increase of 9·3 per cent. over the previous year. Taken together with about £1 million efficiency savings, this will enable service developments of over £1·4 million to go ahead this year.

Hospital Doctors

62 **Mr. Sayeed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on current consideration of the pay and conditions of hospital doctors in the National Health Service.

83. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement on current consideration of the pay and conditions of hospital doctors in the National Health Service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Hospital doctors' pay has risen by more then 33 per cent. in real terms since 1979. For details of the 1990 pay settlement for National Health Service hospital doctors, I refer my hon. Friends to the reply my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister gave my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr Leigh) on 1 February at columns *260-62*.

We have recently issued detailed guidance to health authorities on consultant's contracts. By 1 April 1991 all hospital consultants will have job plans agreed with local managers setting out their main responsibilities and their fixed commitments in the National Health Service.

The issue of junior doctors' hours remains a priority for the Government. I recently met representatives of all the

key parties, including the profession and National Health Service management, to discuss the way forward. A working group has been established to explore the key issues.

78. **Mr. Boswell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the latest figure for the number of hospital doctors in the National Health Service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The latest figure for the number of hospital doctors in the National Health Service in England is 45,574 as at 30 September 1988. This figure includes permanent paid and honorary staff.

Prescriptions

68. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has as to the number of people who do not take the full number of items listed on a prescription by their general practitioner.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not collected centrally.

Alcohol Abuse Services, Sheffield

70. **Mr. Duffy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he expects to next meet the chairman of the Trent regional health authority to discuss alcohol abuse services in Sheffield.

Mr. Dorrell: Ministers meet all regional health authority chairmen regularly and discuss a wide range of issues.

Social Workers

71. **Mr. Bill Michie:** To ask the Secretay of State for Health what steps he is taking to assist in the recruitment of local authority social workers.

82. **Mrs. Heal:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to assist in the recruitment of local authority social workers.

87. **Mrs. Wise:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to assist in the recruitment of local authority social workers.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer the hon. Members to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr Worthington) earlier today.

Medical Negligence

72. **Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he proposes that National Health Service indemnity in cases of medical negligence will extend to National Health Service hospital trusts.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Yes.

West Midlands Regional Health Authority

79. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current annual level of capital spend for which the West Midlands regional health authority is responsible; and what it was for the year 1978-879.

Mr. Dorrell: The annual accounts of the West Midlands regional health authority and the health authorities comprising the West Midlands region record total capital expenditure of £27·8 million (cash) in 1978-79 and £82·7 million (cash) in 1988-89 (the latest year available) representing an increase in real terms of some 35 per cent. measured at 1988-89 prices.

Patient Care

81. **Dame Jill Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether any initiatives are being taken to promote a better quality of care for patients.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The White Paper reforms aim to provide a better National Health Service with more attention to quality of care and customer service flowing from greater devolution, the separation of purchaser and provider functions and the introduction of contracts, wider choice and the extension of medical and clinical audit. These proposals are being reinforced by a £10 million programme of project-based initiatives to make the consumers' interest more central to the management and delivery of health care. The Government have also initiated talks with the royal colleges and other statutory bodies with an interest in assessing clinical standards in the National Health Service after implementation of the reforms. Agreement has been reached on the provision of advice and assistance in the assessment and monitoring of clinical standards for all National Health Service patients through a clinical standards advisory group. An amendment to the National Health Service and Community Care Bill has been tabled to provide a statutory basis for the group.

Regional Health Authorities (Funding)

84. **Mr. Andrew Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a further statement on funding for regional health authorities in 1990-91.

Mr Dorrell: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply my hon. Friend the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State gave my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) on 1 May at column *523*.

Hospital Doctors (Working Hours)

88. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he last visited St. George's hospital, Tooting to discuss doctors' working hours.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has not visited St. George's hospital to discuss this matter.

On 10 April 1990 I met the representatives of health departments, the joint consultants committee, including the presidents of the Royal Colleges of Surgeons and Physicians, the British Medical Association and National Health Service management, to begin the process of identifying and implementing ways forward on the complex issue of junior doctors' hours.

A working group is to explore the main issues relating to junior doctors' hours and strategies for tackling them. They are expected to make an initial report to the ministerial group during the summer.

Organ Transplants

92. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what further representations he has received about the availability of human organs for transplantation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Since the reply given to my hon. Friend by my hon. Friend the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health on 5 April 1990 at columns *736-37*, we have received representations from hon. Members on behalf of the president of the British Kidney Patient Association and of several constituents. We are also in frequent contact with organisations and individuals interested in promoting organ donation.

Hospital Patients

93. **Mr. Donald Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many in-patients are being treated annually by the National Health Service.

Mr. Dorrell: In the year ending March 1989, 6·6 million in-patient cases were treated in National Health Service hospitals in England, representing an increase of 22 per cent. since 1979.

NHS Services

95. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what major changes there have been in provision of services within the National Health Service since 1979.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Since 1979, the level of spending on the National Health Service in the United Kingdom has increased by nearly 44 per cent. in real terms and the gross annual expenditure on the service now stands at over £29 billion (1990-91). The numbers of people providing care has also increased. There are 14,000 more doctors and dentists and 68,000 more nurses and midwives. These extra resources mean that 44,000 NHS operations are now carried out every week including a 22 per cent. increase in in-patient treatments, a 6.5 per cent. increase in out-patient attendances and an 81 per cent. increase in day cases over the 1979 totals. Considerable improvements have also been made in screening, vaccination and immunisation. Over 90 per cent. of low birth weight babies now survive the crucial first four weeks of life. The impact of these and other developments including the general improvement in standards of living can be seen in changes to key indicators such as the decline in the rate of infant mortality which now stands at an all-time low and the increase in life expectancy.

Day Patients

99. **Mrs. Ann Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many day-patient cases were treated last year.

Mr. Dorrell: In the year ending March 1989 there were over 1 million day-case admissions in England representing an increase of over 70 per cent. since 1979.

NHS Management

101. **Miss Widdecombe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what changes are being made in management within the National Health Service.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The National Health Service management executive is in close contact with regional health authorities as they take forward proposals for the delegation of functions and other management aspects of "Working for Patients". Considerations include the need for any changes to be made to management structures both in health authorities and units to improve services.

Progress overall in the implementation of the NHS review is good and we remain confident that management arrangements will be in place to enable the reforms contained in the NHS and Community Care Bill to be implemented next year, resulting in improved standards, more effective use of resources and better patient care.

Patient Choice

104. **Mr. Janman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health in what specific ways the National Health Service reforms will extend patient choice; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) on 1 May 1990 at column *534*.

General Practitioners

105. **Mr. Burt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many general practitioners there are currently.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave my hon. Friends the Members for Beverley (Mr. Cran) and for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett) earlier today.

Hospital Waiting Lists, Northumberland

106. **Mr. Amos:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total number of patients on the Northumberland health authority's hospital waiting lists; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: At 30 September 1989, a total of 1,610 patients were awaiting admission to hospital for in-patient treatment and 491 were awaiting day case treatment in Northumberland health authority. In September 1987, the corresponding figures were 1,789 and 539. Between September 1987 and September 1989 the percentage of patients waiting over a year fell from 20 per cent. to 11 per cent. for in-patients and from 7 per cent. to 3 per cent. for day cases.

Medicine Imports

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is his estimate of the number of overseas production sites supplying parallel imports of medicines to the United Kingdom market under licence from his Department; and how many such overseas sites have been inspected by the United Kingdom's medicines inspectors in each of the last five years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: There are 143 overseas production sites currently listed on product licences for parallel imported medicinal products. Inspections of these sites carried out by United Kingdom medicines inspectors over the last five years are as follows:

Year	*No. Inspections*
1989	7
1988	5
1987	5
1986	12
1985	1

Additional visits have been carried out on behalf of the United Kingdom by local inspectorates.

Regional Health Authorities (Creditors)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list by regional health authority the amounts creditors were due to be paid that were *(a)* one month, *(b)* two months, *(c)* three months, *(d)* four to six months, *(e)* six months to one year and *(f)* over a year overdue.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not available centrally.

Land Sales

Mr Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if, pursuant to his parliamentary reply of 9 May, *Official Report*, column *128*, he will give a breakdown of the figures given for the proceeds from disposal of National Health Service land in the East Anglian region, to show proceeds in each of the district health authorities in the East Anglian region, for 1984-85, 1985-86, 1986-87, 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Mr. Dorrell: The regional health authority has provided the information in the following table. They are unable to provide a breakdown by districts for the years 1984-85 and 1985-86.

Income from land sales

District Health Authority	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
Cambridge	160,890	178,271	2,809,500
Peterborough	146,250	72,000	387,499
West Suffolk	1,860,400	124,900	2,182,500
East Suffolk	736,723	945,582	2,310,460
Norwich	449,286	1,201,120	1,800,706
Great Yarmouth and Waveney	328,250	349,475	60,000
West Norfolk and Wisbech	220,503	419,838	1,013,150
Huntingdon	29,580	325,000	96,050

The figures given represent the total of sales within each district. The figures given for Norwich health authority therefore differ from those supplied on 26 April by my hon. Friend the then Paliamentary Under-Secretary of State at columns *293-94*, which were restricted to sales of over £50,000.

Geriatric Beds

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish a table showing for each National Health Service region for 1980 through to 1989 *(a)* the number of geriatric beds, *(b)* the number of patients per geriatric bed and *(c)* the population over 65 years of age, in each case as an index taking 1980 as the base.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested is given in the tables. The following changes affect the comparability of figures over time:

(a) In 1982 National Health Service restructuring led to changes in the region of management of some London hospitals.

(b) The 1987-88 and 1988-89 figures are for beds in wards classified as being for elderly patients whereas earlier figures are for beds assigned to the geriatrics department.

(c) The 1987-88 and 1988-89 figures for in-patients are for patients treated by a geriatric clinical consultant whereas earlier figures are for patients treated in the geriatric department. Some patients previously categorised as geriatric are now categorised as being treated in general medicine.

Mid year population estimates, by Regional Health Authority, aged 65 and over, thousands.

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*
England	7,067	7,108	7,108	7,061	7,034	7,184	7,295	7,407	7,465
Northern	448	451	451	447	445	456	464	472	476
Yorkshire	549	550	548	543	539	549	556	563	567
Trent	665	670	672	669	669	684	697	710	718
East Anglia	301	305	307	307	308	314	323	331	337
North West Thames	476	479	478	476	474	483	490	496	497
North East Thames	565	563	561	558	553	565	571	576	577
South East Thames	617	617	617	615	609	615	622	628	629
South West Thames	491	492	491	486	484	491	495	500	501
Wessex	456	462	464	465	465	478	486	495	502
Oxford	288	293	296	293	295	306	314	323	329
South Western	539	543	543	543	542	556	565	576	582
West Midlands	699	704	707	702	704	724	740	756	766

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
Mersey	349	351	350	346	344	351	356	362	364
North Western	626	627	622	611	602	612	616	621	621

Index 1980 = 100

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
England	100	101	101	100	100	102	103	105	106
Northern	100	101	101	100	99	102	104	105	106
Yorkshire	100	100	100	99	98	100	101	102	103
Trent	100	101	101	101	101	103	105	107	108
East Anglia	100	101	102	102	103	105	107	110	112
North West Thames	100	101	101	100	100	102	103	104	105
North East Thames	100	100	99	99	98	100	101	102	102
South East Thames	100	100	100	100	99	100	101	102	102
South West Thames	100	100	100	99	98	100	101	102	102
Wessex	100	101	102	102	102	105	106	109	110
Oxford	100	102	103	102	102	106	109	112	114
South Western	100	101	101	101	101	103	105	107	108
West Midlands	100	101	101	101	101	104	106	108	110
Mersey	100	101	100	99	99	101	102	104	105
North Western	100	100	99	98	96	98	98	99	99

Source: Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys.

In-patient cases treated per available bed, National Health Service hospitals, by Regional Health Authority
Geriatric sector

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987-88	1988-89
England	4·8	5·0	5·3	5·8	6·3	6·9	7·3	7·5	8·2
Northern	4·8	5·2	5·1	5·3	5·3	5·6	5·6	5·3	6·0
Yorkshire	5·6	6·2	6·7	7·3	7·9	8·9	9·3	10·3	11·2
Trent	5·7	5·9	6·2	6·6	7·0	7·6	8·1	7·1	8·2
East Anglia	5·6	6·0	6·0	6·3	6·8	7·6	7·5	7·8	8·5
North West Thames	4·5	4·6	4·8	5·4	5·9	6·2	6·5	7·1	7·2
North East Thames	3·6	3·4	3·8	4·2	4·8	5·4	5·8	6·4	7·6
South East Thames	5·2	5·5	5·7	6·0	6·8	7·5	8·1	8·5	9·2
South West Thames	4·8	4·4	5·5	6·2	7·1	7·4	7·9	8·4	7·8
Wessex	3·7	4·0	4·2	4·5	4·8	5·3	6·0	6·7	7·8
Oxford	6·3	6·8	7·0	7·5	7·9	8·1	8·0	6·9	7·5
South Western	4·8	5·2	5·0	5·8	6·2	6·8	7·1	7·7	8·1
West Midlands	3·9	4·1	4·5	4·8	5·5	6·1	6·4	6·4	6·7
Mersey	4·7	4·6	4·9	5·5	5·6	6·4	7·0	7·7	9·4
North Western	5·0	5·5	6·0	6·7	7·2	8·0	8·4	9·1	9·7
SHAs	n/a	n/a	5·5	6·7	5·7	4·8	4·2	4·5	4·0

Index 1980 = 100

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987-88	1988-89
England	100	105	111	121	131	144	151	157	171
Northern	100	108	106	110	109	117	117	111	125
Yorkshire	100	110	119	131	141	159	166	183	200
Trent	100	104	109	116	123	135	142	124	144
East Anglia	100	106	107	111	121	134	133	139	150
North West Thames	100	103	108	121	132	138	144	159	161
North East Thames	100	96	107	117	133	150	162	178	212
South East Thames	100	107	110	116	131	144	156	163	178
South East Thames	100	92	115	130	149	154	164	175	163
Wessex	100	108	113	122	132	144	163	181	212
Oxford	100	107	110	118	125	128	127	108	118
South Western	100	109	105	122	130	143	148	161	169
West Midlands	100	106	117	124	141	158	166	167	174
Mersey	100	97	103	116	119	136	148	162	199
North Western	100	109	119	133	142	159	167	181	192
SHAs	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Source: SH3 return, 1980 to 1986.
KH03 and SH3a returns, 1987-88 onwards.

Average daily number of available beds, NHS hospitals, by Regional Health Authority
Geriatric sector

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987-88	1988-89
England	54,947	55,550	55,646	55,801	55,571	55,320	54,588	53,276	51,043
Northern	3,727	3,676	3,809	3,885	3,894	3,940	3,949	4,075	3,958
Yorkshire	5,259	5,206	5,090	5,041	4,938	4,960	4,827	4,621	4,291
Trent	5,053	5,153	5,204	5,229	5,233	5,237	5,263	5,116	4,901
East Anglia	2,340	2,351	2,372	2,417	2,452	2,467	2,497	2,539	2,500

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987-88	1988-89
North West Thames	3,348	3,422	3,366	3,329	3,380	3,417	3,460	3,386	3,305
North East Thames	4,416	4,429	4,555	4,574	4,635	4,636	4,614	4,260	3,972
South East Thames	4,247	4,208	4,237	4,233	4,088	3,985	3,740	3,535	3,384
South West Thames	3,015	3,505	3,064	3,035	2,975	2,907	2,878	2,832	2,834
Wessex	3,536	3,534	3,543	3,510	3,477	3,468	3,433	3,203	3,022
Oxford	2,071	2,055	2,027	2,006	1,974	1,866	1,825	2,054	1,832
South Western	3,696	3,739	3,771	3,848	3,807	3,782	3,720	3,486	3,464
West Midlands	6,181	6,182	6,256	6,230	6,235	6,176	6,054	6,004	5,665
Mersey	3,101	3,073	3,136	3,171	3,180	3,120	3,042	2,909	2,786
North Western	4,957	5,018	5,135	5,193	5,175	5,230	5,161	5,128	5,001
SHAs	0	0	80	102	127	130	126	128	128

Index 1980 = 100

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987-88	1988-89
England	100	101	101	102	101	101	99	97	93
Northern	100	99	102	104	104	106	106	109	106
Yorkshire	100	99	97	96	94	94	92	88	82
Trent	100	102	103	103	104	104	104	101	97
East Anglia	100	100	101	103	105	105	107	108	107
North West Thames	100	102	101	99	101	102	103	101	99
North East Thames	100	100	103	104	105	105	104	96	90
South East Thames	100	99	100	100	96	94	88	83	80
South West Thames	100	116	102	101	99	96	95	94	94
Wessex	100	100	100	99	98	98	97	91	85
Oxford	100	99	98	97	95	90	88	99	88
South Western	100	101	102	104	103	102	101	94	94
West Midlands	100	100	101	101	101	100	98	97	92
Mersey	100	99	101	102	103	101	98	94	90
North Western	100	101	104	105	104	106	104	103	101
SHAs	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Source: SH3 return, 1980-1986
KH03 return, 1987-88 onwards

Hospital Beds, Peterborough

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total of hospital beds in each of the past five years within the constituency of Peterborough.

Mr. Dorrell: The available information is given in the table.

Average daily available beds, (wards open overnight) and in-patient cases treated, Peterborough District Health Authority 1984 to 1988-89

Year	Available Beds	In-patient cases treated
1984	1,161	30,250
1985	1,146	31,966
1986	1,145	32,137
1987-88	1,148	33,934
1988-89	1,187	35,163

DES/Stilboestrol

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will implement the recommendations made in 1989 by the European Commission regarding the drug DES/Stilboestrol;

(2) if there are any plans to compile a register of people who have been exposed to the drug DES/Stilboestrol;

(3) if he has any plans to assist individuals and their families who have been adversely affected by a prescription of the drug DES/Stilboestrol.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: About 7,500 women in the United Kingdom were prescribed diethylistlboestrol during pregnancy. There is published evidence that this may have increased their risk of getting breast cancer by a small amount. There is also evidence of an increased risk of the daughters of women who received diethylstilboestrol in pregnancy getting vaginal cancer (a rare disease) or cervical cancer.

The number of women who might develop such a cancer is very small, and no specific arrangements have been made to identify them. However, the prospects for early detection of breast and cervical cancer, irrespective of its origin, have been greatly enhanced by the introduction of national screening programmes. It is open to any woman who does not fall within the age groups covered by the programmes to consult her doctor, who will arrange for any test which he or she considers necessary. Women who develop any symptoms which worry them should of course go immediately to their GP.

In June 1989 the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the use of diethylstilboestrol and its effects on the health of users and their children. The resolution called on the European Commission to identify those exposed to DES and to take appropriate action. It is for the European Commission to respond on the resolution.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research is being conducted into the effects of the drug, DES/Stilboestrol.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This Department has sponsored no such research. Information about research conducted by other research institutions is not collected centrally by the Department.

Dentures

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of complete and partial dentures, respectively, supplied under the National Health Service during the years 1978 and 1988.

Mr. Dorrell: Figures for synthetic dentures are available as requested. Figures for metal dentures are available only as provided. Calendar year figures ceased to be kept from 1986.

	England	
	1978 (calendar year)	*1988-89 (financial year)*
Number of complete synthetic dentures supplied	1,042,060	1,107,940
Number of partial synthetic dentures supplied	586,750	690,460
Number of courses of treatment involving the provision or repair of metal dentures	52,140	187,990
Total	1,680,950	1,986,390

Diabetes

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information he has on how many diabetes sufferers need one third ml amounts of insulin per dose, how much it costs to provide *(a)* the smaller syringes and *(b)* the larger syringes to diabetics for each of the last 11 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No information is available centrally on the numbers of diabetics needing one third ml of insulin per dose. The estimated costs of providing one half ml and 1 ml disposable syringes, available since 1 September 1987, on the list of appliances general practitioners may prescribe in England were as follows:

Year	*ml size*	*£ million*
1987 (last 2 quarters)	0·5	0·7
	1	minimal
1988	0·5	2·3
	1	1·46
1989 (first 2 quarters)	0·5	1·12
	1	0·47

I cannot add to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Leicester, East on 17 May 1990 at column *492*, that there is insufficient clinical demand for one third ml syringes for this product to be added to the general practitioners list.

Polychlorinated Biphenyls

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what studies have been undertaken to establish levels of polychlorinated biphenyls in breast milk; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The results of surveys on polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) residues in food and human tissues, conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, have been published in food surveillance papers 13 and 16, copies of which are available in the Library. The levels of PCBs in breast milk have fallen. The Committee on the Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment has considered the report of the working party on pesticide residues and in commenting on PCB residues in human breast milk said

"the levels of PCBs found in the UK survey are at least one order of magnitude below the lowest levels which are claimed to have had adverse effects on infant health".

A further, more comprehensive, survey on the levels of PCBs and other organochlorine residues in human breast milk is currently under way. The results should be available at the end of this year.

Hospital Beds

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total number of hospital beds in each of the past five years within the constituency of Northavon.

Mr. Dorrell: The available information is given in the table.

Available beds and in-patient cases treated, Frenchay and Southmead district health authorities, 1984-1988/89

	Average daily available beds	*In-patient cases*
Frenchay		
1984	2,666	22,255
1985	2,529	22,407
1986	2,431	21,788
1987-88	2,293	23,130
1988-89	2,168	22,585
Southmead		
1984	1,802	32,909
1985	1,688	33,965
1986	1,602	34,989
1987-88	1,477	35,592
1988-89	1,420	34,141

Source: SH3 return, 1984-86.
SH3 and KHO3 returns 1987-88 onwards.

Incontinence

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information the Körner database collects on the continence advisory service and the provision of incontinence supplies.

Mr. Dorrell: Körner community returns do make provision for the recording of the annual number of patient contacts made by community continence nurses, but since many districts treat this service as part of the general duties of community nurses, they do not identify it within their returns. No information is available through Körner on the provision of incontinence supplies.

Performance-related Pay

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give details of the maxima of performance-related pay paid out by Central Manchester, South Manchester and Trafford district health authorities in the financial year 1989-90.

Mr. Dorrell: The maxima of performance-related pay for general managers in Central Manchester, South Manchester and Trafford health authorities is 6 per cent. and for senior managers it is 4 per cent.

Details of performance-related pay awarded to individual general managers are confidential between them and their employers.

Project 2000

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will announce the detailed timetable for the full introduction of the Project 2000 training initiative for nurses in each part of England, giving the specific implementation dates for each health authority.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: As I announced in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) on 17 May at column *494*, we have now approved the implementation of Project 2000 in 17 more schools of nursing over the next 12 months. This is in addition to 16 schemes approved last year. Approval has now been given to nearly 40 per cent. of nursing schools in England, covering a total of 64 health districts, and about 20,000 student places. We have provided central funding of approximately £38 million in 1989-90 and 1990-91 for the implementation of Project 2000 in England.

The timetable for future implementation must be largely determined by the funding which can be made available against the background of other competing needs. We must also have regard to the size of the management and planning tasks involved at a time when we recognise that the National Health Service is undergoing many other changes.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what assessment he has made of the problems that will arise in respect of manpower planning in health authorities in England if the introduction of the Project 2000 training initiative for nurses is not fully implemented as originally planned in 1990-91;

(2) what assessment he has made of the problems that will arise in respect of administrative and personnel matters if the introduction of the Project 2000 training initiative for nurses is not fully implemented as originally planned in 1990-91;

(3) what assessment he has made of the problems that will arise in respect of nurse morale if the introduction of the Project 2000 training initiative for nurses is not fully implemented as originally planned in 1990-91;

(4) what assessment he has made of the problems that will arise in respect of nurse recruitment in health authorities in England if the full introduction of the Project 2000 training initiative for nurses is not implemented as originally planned in 1990-91.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It has always been envisaged that the implementation of Project 2000 in England would be phased over a number of years.

Health Authority Capital Charges

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether estimates of health authority capital charges have been completed and valued; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Most health authorities have now compiled asset registers in preparation for capital charging. Estimates of capital charges for the first period of shadow operation in 1990-91, based on valued asset registers as at 31 March 1990, are expected to be available during July.

Cervical Smear Tests

Mr Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what up-to-date information he has about the extent of delays in processing cervical smear tests; what steps he proposes to take to reduce delays; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information is not available in the form requested. Laboratories must aim to return the results of cervical smear tests to the doctor who undertook them within one month. Where this target is not met health authorities are required to take action to reduce delays. This has taken the form of overtime working or increasing the number of laboratory staff and making use of other less busy laboratory facilities either in the National Health Service or private sector. As at March 1990, the latest available date, over 80 per cent. of laboratories were meeting this one-month target. The average processing time of those districts which were failing to meet the target was 7·1 weeks.

Psittacosis

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make psittacosis a notifiable illness; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The Public Health (Control of Diseases) Act 1984 and the Public Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations 1988 define "notifiable" diseases and list the diseases that are to be notified. A review of this legislation is currently being carried out. A consultation document, "Review of the law on infectious disease control", issued by the Department in October 1989, invited comments on an extensive range of options and proposals for changes to the current law. Section 3 of the document identified the diseases which are currently notifiable and sought views on a number of questions including whether any additional diseases should be added to the list. More than 500 responses to the consultation document were submitted, many of which suggested additional diseases, including psittacosis, that should be made notifiable. Officials are now considering all the responses received. The case for making psittacosis a notifiable disease will be given careful consideration.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether his Department has investigated the recent outbreak of psittacosis in Nottingham; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Local clinicians are responsible for initiating epidemiological investigations. We are satisfied that appropriate action was taken at the time of the outbreak.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what studies his Department has undertaken on psittacosis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: None.

Spinal Injury Units

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations the supra-regional forum has received from spinal injury units on the need for central Government funding for psychologists and peripatetic nurses; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I understand that the supra-regional services advisory group is now receiving applications for funding in 1991-92. It is too early to specify how many spinal injury units will request additional funds for psychologists or peripatetic nurses.

Mr. Ashley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will list, for each spinal injury unit, the number of beds in the unit, the number of psychologists and peripatetic nurses employed at the unit and the source of funding for each of these positions;

(2) when the first psychologist was appointed to a spinal injury unit; and what is the accepted role of psychologists and peripatetic nurses at spinal injury units.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The table shows the average daily available bed numbers. Information on the numbers and funding of psychologists and peripatetic nurses is not available centrally and the question of their role is for determination locally.

NHS Spinal Units, England 1988-89

Hospital site	*Average Daily Available Beds*
Hexham General Hospital	34
Pinderfields Hospital, Wakefield	23
Lodge Moor Hospital, Sheffield	43
Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, Stanmore	20
Odstock Hospital, Salisbury	39
Southport Promenade Hospital	35
Stoke Mandeville Hospital	*
Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital, Oswestry	*

* Data for these spinal units were not separated in the statistical return from data on other beds and it is not possible to give a useful figure.

Dental and Eye Charges

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much revenue he expects to be raised from dental and eye charges in 1990-91; and how much revenue has been raised since the inception of charges at current prices.

Mr. Dorrell: The 1990-91 estimates laid before Parliament show income from patient charges for general dental services in England as £388 million. There are no patient charges in the general ophthalmic service. Certain priority groups, including children and those on low incomes, are eligible for free National Health Service sight tests and vouchers towards the cost of glasses where these are necessary. People not included in these priority groups pay private fees to opticians for ophthalmic services.

National Health Service dental and ophthalmic charges were introduced in 1951. Charges for the supply of National Health Service glasses through the general ophthalmic service stopped from 1 July 1986, when vouchers were introduced. The estimated total revenue collected in England since the inception of these patient charges is set out in the following table:

Revenue collected adjusted to 1990-91 prices using the GDP deflator

	Cash total	
	£ million	*£ million*
Charge income from the General Dental Service 1951-52 to 1989-90	2,590	5,710
Charge income from the General Ophthalmic Service 1951-52 to 1986-87	490	2,080

These totals are based on estimates of the England-only income in the period 1951-52 to 1968-69; accounts for these years combined figures for England and Wales. They are gross of any refunds to patients who were incorrectly or inadvertently deemed liable to pay charges.

Competitive Tendering

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much money he estimates has been saved in total by health authorities as a result of compulsory competitive tendering in each of the last five years; and what likely savings he expects to be made in 1990-91 at current prices.

Mr. Dorrell: An initiative was started in 1983 to encourage health authorities to place contracts through competitive tendering of laundry, domestic and catering services. Up to the end of 1988-89 this initiative had resulted in cumulative savings of £110 million with an additional £6 million savings expected in 1989-90. Estimated savings for 1990-91 are not yet available.

Epilepsy

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many nuclear magnetic resonance scanners are possessed by the National Health Service; and what proportions of these are designed for use solely to identify epilepsy.

Mr. Dorrell: I am advised that magnetic resonance scanning is not a useful means of diagnosing epilepsy since most people with epilepsy would have a normal scan.

Food Hygiene Regulations

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make a statement about progress on the proposed amendments to the Food Hygiene Regulations.

Mr. Dorrell: Amendment regulations will be laid before Parliament shortly.

Blood and Blood Products

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health for each National Health Service region, what was the cost of purchases of blood and blood products *(a)* external to the region, and *(b)* from outside the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 23 May 1990]:* The cost of blood for those regions which were net receivers from regional transfusion centres elsewhere in the United Kingdom, for the financial year 1989-90, is given in the table. No blood is imported from outside the United Kingdom.

Information on the value of the blood products supplied by the bio products laboratory (formerly the blood products laboratory) is commercially sensitive. Information on the value of the blood products imported into the United Kingdom is not held centrally either for individual regions or in total.

Costs associated with blood supplied from other regions (net costs)[1]

Region	*£*
Northern	—
Yorkshire	—
Trent	—
East Anglian	3,334

Region	£
North-West Thames	81,091
North-East Thames	156,371
South-East Thames	439,208
South-West Thames	—
Wessex	—
Oxford	—
South Western	—
West Midlands	—
Mersey	—
North Western	—
Wales	1,429

[1] The receiving region pays the supplying region a sum to cover its costs of collecting, processing and transport.

Nurseries

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many women have children under five years; how many of these women work; what the estimated demand for nurseries is; and how many women who do not go to work place their children in nurseries.

Mr. Dorrell: Not all the information requested is centrally available but such data as can be provided are as follows:

Table 1
Great Britain

	1986 *per cent.*	*1988* *per cent.*
Percentage of women with children under 5 years	17	17
Sample base (women aged 16 to 59)	7,478	7,326

Table 2
Great Britain

	1986 *per cent.*	*1988* *per cent.*
Percentage of women, with children under 5, who went out to work		
Full time	9	11
Part time	24	25
Total going out to work[1]	33	36
Sample base (women aged 16 to 59 with child(ren) aged 0 to 4	1,238	1,281

[1] Includes a few cases for which hours of work were not given.

Notes:

1. Table 1 shows that, in 1986 and 1988, 17 per cent. of all women of working age had at least one child aged under five years. Table 2 gives the percentages of these women who, in the same years, were working full time or part time. The data are taken from the General Household Survey, which obtains information from a sample of private households, and are therefore subject to sampling variability.
2. 1988 is the most recent year in which the survey carried questions on day care for children under 5. It showed that 6 per cent. of children under five whose mothers did not go out to work attended a day nursery. This percentage is based on 1,105 children covered by the survey sample, some of whom would be from the same family. The percentage of non-working mothers of children under five whose children attended a day nursery is not available.
3. No information is available on the demand for nurseries.

Kawasaki Disease

Mr. John Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the threat to children's health of *(a)* meningitis and *(b)* Kawasaki disease; how many people in various age groups have died of Kawasaki disease; and if he will issue information to alert the public to the disease's symptoms.

Mr. Dorrell: The two most important causes of meningitis in childhood are meningococcal meningitis and haemophilus influenza B meningitis. The Public Health Laboratory Service's communicable disease surveillance centre and the Department closely monitor meningococcal meningitis, which is a notifiable disease, so that local outbreaks can be dealt with promptly.

The chief medical officer wrote to all doctors and health authorities in February 1988 about the early management and prevention of spread of meningococcal infection. Copies of the two letters, PL/CMO(88)1 and PL/CMO(88)2, are available in the Library.

The Public Health Laboratory Service is paying special attention to the surveillance of haemophilus influenza B meningitis, and there are prospects for the use of effective vaccine following appropriate trials.

Surveillance of Kawasaki syndrome has been conducted jointly by the British Paediatric Association and the Public Health Laboratory Service's communicable disease surveillance centre since 1983. A total of 112 reports of Kawasaki disease was received for cases with onset in 1989. This gives an incidence of 1·5 per 100,000 children under five years old.

The following table shows the number of deaths from acute febrile mucocutaneous lymph node syndrome[1] (MCLS), which includes Kawasaki disease, in England and Wales:

Year	*Age* *Under 1 year*	*1 years*	*2 years*
1985	—	—	1
1986	1	—	—
1987	1	—	—
1988	1	—	1
[2]1989	—	—	—

[1] 9th Revision International Communicable Disease Code 446·1
[2] Provisional

Kawasaki syndrome is a disease mainly of young children and has clinical features similar to other infections. The results of routine investigations may suggest the diagnosis but are not specific. Public information on the disease would not, therefore, assist in early diagnosis of the condition. Greater professional awareness amongst paediatricians in this country of its signs and symptoms would be more appropriate. In this regard, a leading article has recently appeared in the *British Medical Journal* (21 April 1990), copies of which are available in the Library.

Artificial Sweeteners

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many members of the Committee on the Toxicity of Chemicals in Food are consultants to companies that are involved with the manufacture, marketing or use of artificial sweeteners in their products; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, further to his answer to the hon. Member for South Shields on 22 May, if he will name the one member of the Committee on the Toxicity of Chemicals in Food who acts as a consultant to the International Sweeteners Organisation.

Mr. Dorrell: It is not our policy to publish details of the outside interests of members of the independent expert advisory committee on toxicity. Members declare, in confidence, to the Department any specific pecuniary relationship between themselves and any company in the field in which the advisory committee operates. When an item in which a member has an interest is discussed the interest is declared and the declaration is minuted.

One member has declared an interest in a company associated with another company which manufactures an artificial sweetener, another member has declared an interest in a company manufacturing an artificial sweetener and a third has declared an interest in an organisation representing manufacturers of artificial sweeteners.

Mentally Ill and Mentally Handicapped People

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what changes in expenditure on and statutory provision for services to the mentally ill and mentally handicapped there have been since 1979.

Mr. Dorrell: Gross spending on hospital and community health services for the mentally ill and mentally handicapped increased in real terms by 20 per cent. (to £1,149 million) and 11 per cent. (to £497 million) respectively between 1978-79 and 1986-87, the most recent year for which information is available. Estimated gross expenditure by local authorities for the two groups increased in real terms by 50 per cent. (to £44 million) and 69 per cent. (to £288 million) respectively over the same period.

Since 1979 there have been a number of important changes to the statute law relevant to services, most notably the Mental Health Act 1983 and the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986. In addition, further changes are proposed in the NHS and Community Care Bill.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how the Government intends to meet the provisions of section 7 of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986 with regard to mentally handicapped people leaving long-stay hospitals.

Mr. Dorrell: As announced in the White Paper "Caring for People" the Government do not now intend to implement section 7 of the Act. The need to do so will be reconsidered in the light of several years' experience of the introduction of the assessment and case management procedures outlined in the White Paper. Current guidance already stresses the need for health authorities to ensure that there is provision for assessing individuals' particular needs.

Hospital Waiting Lists, London

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people are currently on hospital waiting lists in the London area; and what was the figure 12 months ago.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Between 30 September 1988 and 30 September 1989, the latest figures available, the in-patient waiting lists for London health authorities fell from 131,115 to 124,793, a decrease of 4·8 per cent.

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will give for each year from 1978 the energy consumption, broken down by fuel, of the buildings occupied by his Department, expressing the figures in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* 1978-79 money terms and *(c)* units of consumption for electricity in kilowatt hours, gas in therms, liquid fuel in litres and solid fuel in tonnes;

(2) if he will give the number of energy audits carried out in his Department in the last five years and for each audit a statement of its main conclusions;

(3) if he will give the number of dedicated energy managers in his Department and the number of person years devoted to energy management in the latest year.

Mr. Dorrell: For the whole of the period for which records are available, energy consumption for the Department of Health and the Department of Social Security, formerly DHSS, was jointly managed. I refer the hon. Member to the replies my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security gave today.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 6 June 1990

NORTHERN IRELAND

North Eastern Education and Library Board

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what evidence was reported by the Royal Ulster Constabulary investigating team of fraud, misappropriation or financial losses attributable to the management of mechanical and electrical services by the former principal engineer of the North Eastern education and library board;

(2) what was the total cost of Royal Ulster Constabulary investigation into allegations made against the former principal engineer of the North Eastern education and library board; if he will publish the conclusions arrived at by the Royal Ulster Constabulary investigation team; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Cope: An RUC investigation into allegations of irregularities in North Eastern education and library board contracting commenced in June 1986. As a result of the investigation, in August 1987 the RUC forwarded a file to the Director of Public Prosecutions who directed "No prosecution". Details of the costs of the police investigation are not available.

Seat Belts

Mr. Hague: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the wearing of seat belts by drivers and front-seat passengers in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Lives should be saved if all drivers and front-seat passengers wear their seat belts. The Northern Ireland seat belt survey, based on data collected in August 1989, indicates a gradual decline in seat belt usage since May 1983 when 92 per cent. of car drivers wore belts compared with the most recent results when 84 per cent. of observed front-seat passengers were wearing seat belts. Seat belts usage overall in Northern Ireland is lower than the rest of the United Kingdom; 81 per cent. of all observed drivers of all vehicle types in Northern Ireland wore seat belts, compared with a 93 per cent. usage rate of all driver observed in Great Britain.

In addition to the evidence produced by the survey, RUC statistics for 1988 showed that in those cases of front-seat fatalities where it was possible to determine whether seat belts had been worn almost half of those killed were not wearing seat belts.

Failure by front-seat occupants to wear seat belts is against the law though there are certain exemptions. The RUC, in the light of the recent report, will be increasing its vigilance to detect law breakers and to advise and protect them from the folly of their actions.

We shall continue to draw attention to the dangers of failing to wear seat belts within our programme of road casualty reduction.

Departmental Savings

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what were the value-for-money savings in his Department's operations identified by internal audit and internal efficiency arrangements, and by external audit and by management consultants retained by his Department between 1983-84 and 1988-89; and what is the amount of those savings fulfilled to date.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 5 June 1990]:* The improvements resulting from inquiries and studies of the kind the hon. Member mentions are taken into account in the setting of annual budgets and internal targets. The results are not collected centrally.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what mechanisms exist in his office for identifying and tracking value-for-money savings in its operations.

Mr. Cope *[holding answer 5 June 1990]:* The annual public expenditure round plays a key role in promoting value for money through the top down pressure exerted by taut allocations on programme and administrative expenditure. Departments are required to achieve efficiency savings of at least 1·5 per cent., per annum in their running costs, and to produce management plans detailing how these savings are to be achieved. Potential savings can be identified from a variety of sources such as efficiency studies, audit reports, purchasing studies, market testing of in-house operations and policy reviews, as well as by routine management action. All such activities inform the detailed planning and scrutiny of programme and running cost expenditure.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Grant-maintained Schools

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools in England and Wales have held ballots on grant-maintained status.

Mrs. Rumbold: Parental ballots have been held at 90 schools in England and four schools in Wales.

Chalvedon School

Mr. Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to make a decision on the application of Chalvedon school for grant-maintained status.

Mrs. Rumbold: The governing body of Chalvedon school has not yet published proposals for grant-maintained status. When it does so my right hon. Friend will consider them carefully, together with any objections that are received.

Independent Schools (National Curriculum)

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what assessment he has made of the likely impact on educational diversity and choice of independent schools adopting the national curriculum.

Mr. Alan Howarth: My right hon. Friend is committed to the breadth and diversity of educational choice

provided by the independent sector. He is pleased that many independent schools are choosing to adopt the national curriculum.

Special Schools

Mr. Cartwright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether membership of the joint working party for residential special schools will be affected by any new arrangements for determining the pay and conditions of teachers; what bodies form the membership of the joint working party for residential special schools; and how membership of the joint working party for residential special schools was determined.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to him on 23 March 1990, *Official Report*, column *760*.

Education Ministers (Meeting)

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the outcome of the meeting of Education Ministers in Brussels on 31 May.

Mr. MacGregor: My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State and I attended the meeting on 31 May of the Council and the Ministers of Education meeting within the Council. The Ministers adopted conclusions on meetings of senior officials in the education sector, on the treatment of equality of educational opportunity in the training of teachers, and on the preparation of a new convention for the European schools. The Ministers also adopted a resolution on the integration of children and young people with disabilities into ordinary systems of education. There were also discussions on education for enterprise and distance education and training.

The conclusions relating to the European schools invite the commission to draft a new convention which would codify the existing statute and its amending instruments. The conclusions envisage that the draft convention should be finalised with a view to its adoption by the intergovernmental conference to be held before the end of 1991. Unanimity would be required for the adoption of a new convention, which would be subject to ratification by all of the member states. All the member states noted the possibility that the draft convention could incoporate a change in the voting arrangements on the board of governors of the European schools from unanimity to a qualified majority of two thirds, subject to the safeguarding of the specific interests of member states on whose territory European schools are situated. All the member states except the United Kingdom noted the possibility that the Community could become a contracting party to the agreement establishing the European schools alongside the member states. The Government favour the adoption of majority voting in the board of governors, but is not convinced that contracting party status for the Community is necessary or would bring any practical benefit to the management of the European schools.

THE ARTS

National Museums

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Minister for the Arts how many qualified accountants are employed by each of the national museums; and when each institution was last audited.

Mr. Luce: I am advised that the number of qualified accountants currently employed by each of the national museums is as follows:

	Number
British museum	nil
Imperial war museum	nil
National maritime museum	1
National museums and galleries on Merseyside	2
Natural history museum	1
Science museum	3
Victoria and Albert museum	1

All national museums are audited annually by the National Audit Office, the last time being 1989.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Minister for the Arts how many staff were seconded from national museums to regional institutions and vice versa during 1989.

Mr. Luce: I understand that during 1989 four national museums staff were seconded out to regional institutions; and that two members of staff from regional institutions were seconded to work in national museums. I welcome exchanges of staff of this kind.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Minister for the Arts how many outreach programmes by national museums were initiated *(a)* to schools and *(b)* to regional museums during 1989.

Mr. Luce: Detailed information on outreach programmes by national museums initiated during 1989 are not held centrally, but the following cases are examples of the wide range of programmes undertaken to schools and regional museums last year.

The British museum provided teachers' packs, training aids and professional advice to about 6,000 teachers individually and in connection with about 2,000 schools groups visiting the museum. The museum's two travelling exhibitions "Celtic Britain" and "Thomas Rowlandson Prints" toured to four regional venues.

The natural history museum's travelling discovery centre was initiated last year in conjunction with sponsorship from the Clore Foundation.

The science museum undertook an extensive programme of 10 travelling exhibitions to 29 venues during 1988-89.

The Victoria and Albert museum loaned a total of 1,875 objects to 184 venues, of which three were schools and colleges, during 1989.

In addition to these examples the Museums and Galleries Commission's travelling exhibitions unit is actively encouraging national museums to regularly tour their temporary exhibitions to regional venues.

Arts Council

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Minister for the Arts when he last met the chairman of the Arts Council; and what was discussed.

Mr. Luce: I meet Mr. Palumbo from time to time, to discuss matters of mutual interest.

MEDIA Programme

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Minister for the Arts what assessment he has made of the assistance that the European Community's MEDIA programme has given to enable British film producers to work in Europe.

Mr. Luce: The MEDIA programme is an initiative of the European Commission. They have not yet produced a full evaluation of the results achieved in film and television distribution, production, training and so on, so it is not easy to assess at this stage the precise assistance given to British film producers.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Minister for the Arts if the Government will support the European Commission's proposal to increase the budget of its MEDIA 92 programme to 250 million ecu over the next five years.

Mr. Luce: The European Commission made proposals last month for an action programme to promote the development of the European audiovisual industry at a cost of 250 million ecu over the years 1991-95. This is based on its existing MEDIA programme, the outcome of which has yet to be evaluated. I am considering with colleagues what our approach should be to its new proposals.

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the Minister for the Arts what support he has given to the work of *(a)* Media Guarantee, *(b)* Media Venture, *(c)* Media Investment Club, *(d)* CARTOON, *(e)* European Audivisual Entrepreneurs, *(f)* Euro Aim, *(g)* Broadcasting Across the Barriers of the European Language, *(h)* the European Film Distribution Office and (i) the European Script Fund under the MEDIA 92 project.

Mr. Luce: The MEDIA programme is a specific initiative of the European Commission which has not been presented to member states for approval. It is funded direct by the Commission from the general budget, to which the United Kingdom is a contributor. Her Majesty's Government do not provide direct support to these individual MEDIA projects.

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will give for each year from 1978 the energy consumption, broken down by fuel, of the buildings occupied by the offices for which he is responsible, expressing the figures in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* 1978-79 money terms and *(c)* units of consumption for electricity in kilowatt hours, gas in therms, liquid fuel in litres and solid fuel in tonnes.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 5 June 1990]:* The figures requested by the hon. Member are available only in *(a)* cash terms and *(b)* 1978-79 money terms, for the following years:

	Electricity £	*Gas* £	*Liquid fuel* £
1987-88	5,069	1,349	659
	(2,470)	(657)	(321)
1988-89	6,717	970	845
	(3,056)	(441)	(384)
1989-90[1]	5,877	872	778
	(2,511)	(373)	(332)

Note: () denotes 1978-79 money terms.
[1] 1989-90 expenditure relates to eleven months consumption only.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will give the number of dedicated energy managers in the offices for which he is responsible and the number of person-years devoted to energy management in the latest year.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 5 June 1990]:* The Office of Arts and Libraries has no dedicated energy manager. It is advised by the Cabinet Office in such matters.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister for the Arts if he will give the number of energy audits carried out in the offices for which he is responsible in the last five years and for each audit statement of its main conclusions.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 5 June 1990]:* No energy audits have been carried out in the Office of Arts and Libraries, but surveys to improve energy efficiency have been undertaken and measures to reduce energy consumption have been, and are being, taken.

Departmental Savings

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Minister for the Arts what were the value for money savings in his Department's operations identified by internal audit and internal efficiency arrangements by external audit and by management consultants retained by his Department between 1983-84 and 1988-89; and what is the amount of those savings fulfilled to date.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 5 June 1990]:* Improvements resulting from inquiries and studies of the kind referred to are taken into account in the setting of the office's annual budgets and internal targets. It is not possible, however, to quantify savings fulfilled in the way suggested because of the effect of wider organisational changes within the office.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Minister for the Arts what mechanisms exist in the Office of Arts and Libraries for identifying and tracking value for money savings in its operations.

Mr. Luce *[holding answer 5 June 1990]:* The Office of Arts and Libraries has no mechanisms for identifying and tracking value-for-money savings, but is advised by the internal audit and staff inspection teams of the Cabinet Office.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Unemployment Benefits

Ms. Short: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide estimates for each of the years 1987-88, 1988-89 and 1989-90 of the amount of income tax collected from the taxation of unemployment benefits.

Mr. Lilley: The latest estimates of the yield from taxing unemployment benefit and supplementary benefit or income support paid in lieu of unemployment benefit are as follows:

	£ million
1987-88	320
1988-89	220
1989-90	180

These estimates are based on national amounts of benefits paid each year to the unemployed and information on income of the unemployed derived from the results of the 1987 family expenditure survey. The figures are subject to revision.

Inflation

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he now expects inflation to fall below 5 per cent.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The "Financial Statement and Budget Report" forecast that all-items RPI inflation would be 5 per cent. in the second quarter of 1991 and would fall further thereafter.

Investment

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on current levels of investment.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Total investment in 1989 was at record levels. Since 1979 total investment has increased by over 40 per cent. or an average of 3½ per cent. a year. This compares to the last Labour Government's record where investment grew by an average of only ¼ per cent. a year.

Poor People

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what fiscal policies the Government have to protect the poorest in society.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The main objective of the Government's fiscal policies is to improve the performance of the economy, which benefits everybody, including the poorest. Since 1979, the basic rate of income tax has been cut from 33 to 25 per cent., benefiting all taxpayers; the main personal allowances have been increased by about 25 per cent. in real terms, taking about 2 million individuals out of tax, compared to the 1978-79 regime indexed for inflation; and the structure of national insurance contributions has been reformed, benefiting in particular the low paid.

Overseas Financial Assets

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the present stock of the overseas financial assets; and what was the level of such assets in 1979.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The estimated level of identified United Kingdom external assets, net of identified liabilities, at the end of 1989 was about £110 billion ("Financial Statement and Budget Report 1990", paragraph 3.39), compared with about £12½ billion at the end of 1979. Later information will be published in the balance of payments Pink Book in August.

PAYE

Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what instructions the Inland Revenue has issued relating to PAYE to be applied on fees paid to one-man service companies; and under what statutory authority such instructions were formulated.

Mr. Lilley: Schedule E (PAYE) applies to the emoluments of an individual arising from either an employment or an office. Whether in any particular case there is a contract of employment with an individual, or his services are supplied under a contract with a one-man service company, are questions to be decided by reference to all the facts and circumstances.

Tax Debts

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the tax debts at the latest date for which figures are available for *(a)* overall income tax, *(b)* PAYE and *(c)* corporation tax.

Mr. Lilley: The amounts of tax outstanding at the annual balance date to the end of October 1988 (the latest published figures), together with provisional figures for the year to October 1989, are as follows:

		£ billion
Assessed taxes	*October 1988*	*October 1989 (provisional figures)*
Income tax	2·3	2·3
Corporation tax	1·5	1·6
CGT	0·1	0·2
PAYE		
Closed years	0·8	0·8
Current year	0·6	0·7
Total	5·3	5·6

The outstanding balances at October are equivalent to 7·75 per cent. and 7·25 per cent. respectively of the total tax due for 1988-89 and 1989-90. They include over £1 billion which had only recently become due, and the bulk (about four-fifths) attracts interest. The amounts actually remitted or written off—mostly due to insolvency—in these years were less than 1 per cent. of the tax due.

Financial Statistics

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish for each year since 1978-79, including estimates for 1990-91, showing revenue at current and at constant, April 1990, prices from *(a)* local authority domestic rates/community charge, *(b)* local authority commercial rates/uniform business rate, *(c)* employers' national insurance contributions, *(d)* employees' national insurance contributions, *(e)* self-employed national insurance contributions and *(f)* personal income tax.

Mr. Major: In so far as it is available, the information requested is given in the tables. In the second table the figures are expressed in constant 1989-90 prices.

£ billion

	Domestic rates[1]	Business rates	Employers' NICs[2]	Employees' NICs[3]	Income tax
1978-79	2·36	3·43	8·24	4·09	18·75
1979-80	2·84	3·99	10·26	4·85	20·60
1980-81	3·71	5·04	12·05	5·94	24·30
1981-82	4·60	6·08	12·77	7·52	28·72
1982-83	5·21	6·88	12·02	9·20	30·36
1983-84	5·01	7·25	12·45	10·53	31·11
1984-85	5·32	7·63	12·20	11·29	32·51
1985-86	5·65	8·23	12·53	12·11	35·35
1986-87	6·54	9·16	13·82	12·79	38·50
1987-88	7·29	9·83	15·33	14·13	41·40
1988-89	8·35	10·55	17·28	15·65	43·43
1989-90[5]	9·17	11·29	18·33	14·71	48·69
1990-91[6]	11·28	12·14	20·62	15·27	54·98

1989-90 prices[4]

£ billion

	Domestic rates[1]	Business rates	Employers' NICs[2]	Employees' NIC[3]	Income tax
1978-89	5·51	8·01	19·24	9·55	43·73
1979-80	5·68	7·98	20·51	9·71	41·15
1980-81	6·27	8·52	20·36	10·04	41·01
1981-82	7·09	9·37	19·68	11·59	44·22
1982-83	7·50	9·90	17·29	13·24	43·64
1983-84	6·88	9·96	17·11	14·47	42·69
1984-85	6·96	9·98	15·95	14·76	42·46
1985-86	7·02	10·22	15·56	15·04	43·86
1986-87	7·86	11·01	16·61	15·36	46·21
1987-88	8·30	11·19	17·45	16·10	47·10
1988-89	8·89	11·24	18·41	16·67	46·21
1989-90[5]	9·17	11·29	18·33	14·71	48·69
1990-91[6]	10·59	11·40	19·36	14·34	52·04

[1] Includes community charge.
[2] Includes national insurance surcharge in the period to 1984-85.
[3] Includes national insurance contributions by self-employed for which separate data are only available from 1986-87 to 1988-89.
[4] Treasury estimate of GDP deflator in 1989-90 is used to convert current prices to constant 1989-90 prices.
[5] Estimate.
[6] Budget forecast.

Sir Ian Gilmour: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish figures, at constant 1990 prices, for each year since 1979, showing *(a)* revenue from North sea oil and gas, *(b)* revenue from privatisation, *(c)* public sector borrowing requirement, *(d)* balance of payments current account, *(e)* the rate of inflation at April of each year and *(f)* interest rates at April of each year.

Mr. Major: In so far as it is available, the information requested is given in the table. The appropriate figures are expressed in 1989 (or 1989-90) prices.

£ billion at 1989 prices

	North sea revenues[1]	Privatisation proceeds[1]	PSBR[1]	Current account	RPI inflation in April	Interest rates at end of April[2]
1979	4·6	0·8	19·9	−1·1	10·1	12
1980	6·3	0·7	21·2	4·8	21·8	17
1981	10·0	0·8	13·3	10·3	12·0	12
1982	11·3	0·7	12·8	6·6	9·4	13
1983	12·1	1·6	13·3	5·2	4·0	10
1984	15·7	2·8	13·2	2·6	5·2	8·5-8·75
1985	14·1	3·4	7·0	3·9	6·9	12·5-12·75
1986	5·7	5·3	4·3	−0·1	3·0	10·5
1987	5·3	5·9	−3·9	−5·0	4·2	9·5
1988	3·4	7·6	−15·4	−16·0	3·9	8
1989	2·3	4·2	−7·9	−20·9	8·0	13
1990	—	—	—	—	9·4	15

[1] Data in first three columns are for financial years. A Treasury estimate of the GDP deflator in 1989-90 has been used to convert current price figures to constant 1989-90 prices as the outturn is not yet available.
[2] Base rates of selected retail banks.

Cannabis

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps are taken to minimise environmental pollution when seized cannabis is disposed of.

Mr. Ryder: Most cannabis seized by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise is destroyed by incineration within Queen's warehouses. The incinerators used are designed to

comply with the emission requirements of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, ensuring total burnout of solid and gaseous material.

Customs staff are instructed to consult with local authorities for advice where destruction of drugs might lead to environmental hazard.

Inland Revenue

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) whether Inland Revenue databanks cover by name people living long term in lodging houses;

(2) how many individuals are included by name on Inland Revenue databanks;

(3) whether Inland Revenue databanks include the home as well as place of work addresses of all people recorded in them.

Mr. Lilley: The Inland Revenue records an address for all individuals whom it may need to contact in connection with their own tax liabilities or their accountability for PAYE as an employer. The type of accommodation is of no relevance to the Department.

A taxpayer's computer record will include his personal address. It will not show his place of work address, unless he is a self-employed person working from his home. It is not possible to say at any given time exactly how many individuals are on record, but we would expect currently to have approximately 33 million.

National Savings

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will take further measures to change National Savings products.

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in his Budget increases of 1 per cent. in the interest rate on the national savings investment account and income bonds. Changes to the terms of some other key national savings products which encourage long-term savings are being made over the next three to four weeks, as follows:

a new fixed interest savings certificate, offering a tax free guaranteed return of 9·5 per cent. a year if held for five years;

a similar improvement in the associated regular monthly savings scheme, the yearly plan;

a new index-linked savings certificate revalued monthly by reference to the RPI, and offering tax free guaranteed extra interest of 4·5 per cent. a year, if held for five years;

a new series capital bond offering a guaranteed return of 13 per cent. a year (taxable, but credited without prior deduction of income tax), if held for five years.

These measures show the determination of my right hon. Friend to encourage more people to save, and people to save more. They maintain the momentum of the savers' Budget, and demonstrate that national savings will play a significant part in continuing to stimulate the savings habit.

Teachers' Salaries

Mr. Latham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost to public funds in the current financial year and with retrospective effort to 6 April of transferring the total cost of teachers' salaries from local government to the Exchequer but leaving the current level of grant to local authorities unchanged; and what addition that would require to *(a)* income tax and *(b)* value added tax if the extra cost were divided equally between them.

Mr. Norman Lamont *[holding answer 23 May 1990]:* If local authorities spent in line with the education component of total standard spending in England and Wales, and total current expenditure in Scotland, the total cost of teachers' salaries would be around £9½ billion. If there were no change to revenue support grant and the cost of teachers' salaries were divided equally between local authorities and the Exchequer, this would imply additional central Government expenditure of around £4¼ billion. This is equivalent to an increase of around 3p in the basic rate of income tax or an increase of around two percentage points in the VAT rate.

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the number of energy audits carried out in his Department in the last five years and for each audit a statement of its main conclusions.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 5 June 1990]:* Surveys of the lighting efficiency of Treasury buildings were carried out in 1987. The main recommendation was that there was scope for greater lighting efficiency, mainly in the Parliament street building. This is being taken into account in the forthcoming rewiring.

Income Tax

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish his estimates of the numbers of people paying income tax in *(a)* England, *(b)* Scotland and *(c)* Wales.

Mr. Lilley *[holding answer 5 June 1990]:* The estimated number of individuals resident in England liable to income tax is 20·4 million for 1987-88, the latest available year. The corresponding estimates for Scotland and Wales are 2,160,000 and 940,000 respectively. Married women are included where their earned income exceeds the wife's earned income allowance and any personal allowances and reliefs unused against the husband's income.

PRIME MINISTER

Greek Prime Minister

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister what subjects she discussed during her meeting with the Prime Minister of Greece in London on 16 May.

The Prime Minister: We discussed a wide range of topics including East-West relations, Cyprus, Greece's relations with Turkey, South Africa, the European Community, the case of Mr. Paul Ashwell, and the opportunities for strengthening bilateral links between our two countries.

South Africa

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister if, during her discussions with the President of South Africa on 19 May at Chequers, she or Mr. De Klerk raised the matter of the prospects of South Africa joining the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

The Prime Minister: No. But my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs raised the nuclear non-proliferation treaty with the South African Foreign Minister.

Executive Agencies

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to her answer on 15 May, *Official Report*, column *375*, whether Ministers will continue to give substantive answers to questions on matters delegated to executive agencies where the Member concerned has indicated that he or she does not wish in the first instance to deal directly with the agency chief executive.

The Prime Minister: As I told the hon. Member on 15 May, Ministers remain fully accountable to Parliament for the work of their Department, including executive agencies and are, therefore, ready to reply to questions about any aspect of this work. But one of the objectives of establishing executive agencies is to respond better to the concerns of hon. and right hon. Members. Chief executives and agency managers will have the immediate detailed knowledge which the hon. Member is seeking, as well as the necessary delegated authority to take appropriate action. Where right hon. and hon. Members' concerns relate to an operational matter for which the Minister has delegated authority to the chief executive under the agency's published framework document, they will therefore best be met by going direct to the chief executive or, as appropriate, the local agency manager to get a prompt and effective response.

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to her answer of 30 April, *Official Report*, column *385*, whether the figures quoted on energy consumpton for the Cabinet Office include accommodation occupied by the Privy Council Office.

The Prime Minister: No.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to her answer of 11 May, *Official Report*, column *256*, what energy consumption figures are available for the buildings occupied by the Cabinet Office.

The Prime Minister: Energy consumption figures for 1989-90 are available for approximately 76 per cent. of Cabinet Office holdings. The consumption was:

	Consumption
Electricity	3,497,992 kWh
Gas	34,092 therms
Liquid fuel	488,110 litres

Efficiency Unit

Mr. Amos: To ask the Prime Minister what topics have been covered in the efficiency unit's central scrutiny programme in the last financial year; and how many of the scrutiny reports have been published.

The Prime Minister: Twenty-three efficiency scrutinies have been undertaken by Departments in 1989-90 in association with the efficiency adviser and the efficency unit. The programme of scrutinies, including those which are not yet completed, is as follows:

Department and title of scrutiny	*Report publicly available*
Her Majesty's Customs and Excise	
Entry Processing Arrangements (Import and Export Freight)	No
Department of Employment	
Take-up of Employment Department Programmes	No
Department of Energy	
UKAEA Programme Letters for Nuclear R & D and other nuclear work	No
Department of Education and Science	
Education Support Grants and LEA Training Grants Scheme	Yes
Department of the Environment	
Housing Management Training	No
Departments of Health and Social Security	
Provision and Cost-effectiveness of External Consultancy	Yes
Department of Social Security	
Departmental Debt	No
Department of Trade and Industry	
Charging for Central Services	Yes
Department of Transport	
Vehicle Excise Duty Enforcement	No
Foreign and Commonwealth Office	
Financial Management at FCO Headquarters	No
Home Office	
Government Funding of the Voluntary Sector	Yes
Prison Medical Service	No
Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce	
Middle Management Structure	No
Inland Revenue	
Repayment Claims	No
PAYE Payment Dates	No
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food	
EC Product Classifications for Export Refund Purposes	Yes
Ministry of Defence	
Married Quarters in London Area	No
NAAFI	No
Fixed Wing Aircraft Maintenance	No
Overseas Development Administration	
Aid Expenditure Management	No
Property Services Agency	
Cost-competitiveness Initiative	No
Scottish Office	
Roads Directorate	No
Welsh Office	
Education Grants (Welsh Office)	No

Decisions on the publication of scrutiny reports are taken by the Ministers responsible for the scrutinies concerned. In a number of cases, where a scrutiny has been recently completed or is not yet complete, no decision on publication has been made.

A number of other scrutinies have also been conducted according to full scrutiny disciplines and with guidance from the efficiency unit:

Metropolitan Police Scrutiny Programme
Thames Division

Other Police Forces
Communication
Training
Force Administration
Recruitment
Police Hostel Accommodation
Criminal Investigation Department
Community Relations
Prosecution Process
Accident Reporting Procedures
Force Inspectorate

ENERGY

Mines

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) how many people were employed in *(a)* England, *(b)* Scotland and *(c)* Wales in (i) British Coal opencast mines, (ii) licensed private opencast coal mines, (iii) British Coal deep mines and (iv) licensed private deep coal mines in each of the last five years;

(2) how many *(a)* British Coal opencast mines, *(b)* licensed private opencast coal mines, *(c)* British Coal deep mines and *(d)* licensed private deep coal mines were in operation in (i) England, (ii) Scotland and (iii) Wales in each of the last five years.

Mr. Baldry: These are matters for the British Coal Corporation.

Radioactive Wastes

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) of 21 May, *Official Report*, column *11*, if he will set out those suggestions made by the International Atomic Energy Agency which have been incorporated by Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive into the future research programme.

Mr. Baldry: This is an operational matter for UK Nirex Ltd.

British Gas

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) of 14 May, *Official Report*, column *315*, if there are any issues discussed at his regular meetings with the chairman of British Gas which he does not consider fall within his responsibility in so far as he is ready to give answers to parliamentary questions.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Yes. My right hon. Friend and I discuss a range of matters relating to the gas industry and its development; such discussions are no different from those we also have routinely with representatives of other major United Kingdom energy companies.

Research

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give for each year from 1979-80 to 1991-92 inclusive the outturn estimate, provision or planned expenditure on research funded by his Department into *(a)* coal technology, *(b)* nuclear power and *(c)* energy efficiency expressing these figures in (i) money terms, (ii) 1990-91 real terms and (iii) as a percentage of his Department's total research expenditure.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Figures for the years up to and including 1990-91 are given in the table. Figures for 1991-92 are not available separately but are incorporated in table 5.1 of chapter 5 of the 1990 public expenditure White Paper (Cm. 1005).

	Money terms £ million	*1990-91 real terms £ million*	*Percentage of total R and D expenditure*
(a) Coal technology			
1979-80	1·8	3·8	1·0
1980-81	2·7	4·9	1·2
1981-82	4·9	8·0	2·1
1982-83	3·4	5·2	1·4
1983-84	3·4	5·0	1·4
1984-85	0·9	1·3	0·4
1985-86	0·8	1·1	0·4
1986-87	1·9	2·4	1·0
1987-88	1·4	1·7	0·8
1988-89	0·9	1·0	0·5
1989-90	2·6	2·8	1·5
1990-91	7·6	7·6	4·2
(b) Nuclear energy			
1979-80	145·5	310·6	83·6
1980-81	188·0	339·1	84·7
1981-82	203·2	333·8	85·1
1982-83	212·4	325·4	86·9
1983-84	203·8	298·3	85·7
1984-85	196·2	273·6	84·6
1985-86	189·6	250·9	85·4
1986-87	159·7	204·4	83·0
1987-88	141·0	171·4	79·9
1988-89	159·3	180·7	83·8
1989-90	140·9	150·1	74·5
1990-91	128·9	128·9	72·0
(c) Energy efficiency			
1979-80	1·4	3·0	0·8
1980-81	3·1	5·6	1·4
1981-82	2·5	4·1	1·0
1982-83	4·5	6·9	1·8
1983-84	7·0	10·2	2·9
1984-85	6·2	8·6	2·7
1985-86	3·3	4·4	1·5
1986-87	3·8	4·9	2·0
1987-88	4·1	5·0	2·3
1988-89	2·9	3·3	1·5
1989-90	8·0	8·5	4·5
1990-91	11·0	11·0	6·1

Notes:

1. 1979-80 and 1980-81 figures include some non-R and D expenditure but do not include associated Departmental staff costs.
2. 1981-82 to 1987-88 are taken from the "Annual Review of Government Funded R and D" and cover R and D plus associated Departmental staff costs (ie Frascati R and D). 1988-89 figures are calculated on the same basis.
3. 1989-90 figures are forecast outturn and 1990-91 figures are taken from Estimates. These are R and D only and do not include associated Departmental staff costs. The 1989-90 figure may be subject to end year adjustment.

Generation Fuels

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give, for the latest available year, a regional breakdown of figures consistent with those on fuel used for generation in table 53 of the "Digest of United Kingdom Energy Statistics 1989".

Mr. Wakeham: Information on fuel used for electricity generation by region is not collected by the Department.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give 1988-89 figures consistent with the figures for previous years on the fuel used for generation in table 53 of the "Digest of United Kingdom Energy Statistics 1989".

Mr. Wakeham: The quantities of fuel used for electricity generation by the public supply system in 1988-89 were as follows:

Type of fuel	*Million tonnes of coal or coal equivalent*
Coal[1]	80·69
Oil for firing boilers[2]	6·81
Oil for lighting up boilers[3]	1·47
Natural gas[4]	0·01
Nuclear	19·67
Hydro	2·33
Other[5]	0·16
Total fuel used	111·14

[1] Used in coal fired stations, and coal fired sections of mixed fired stations.
[2] Used in oil fired stations, and oil fired sections of mixed fired stations, plus all oil used in Northern Ireland.
[3] Used in coal fired stations, and pulverised coal fired sections of mixed fired stations. Also used for flame control and overburning. Oil used at coal fired power stations in Northern Ireland is included with oil for firing boilers.
[4] Used in mixed fired stations.
[5] Includes oil used in diesel engine and gas turbine stations or sections (excluding Northern Ireland—see footnotes 2 and 3).

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give, for the latest available year, figures for each power station on the fuel used for generation consistent with those in table 53 of the "Digest of United Kingdom Energy Statistics 1989".

Mr. Wakeham: Information on fuel used for electricity generation by individual power stations is not collected by the Department.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether any individual who has advised the Conservative party on advertising or public relations was involved in selecting the company awarded the advertising contract for electricity privatisation.

Mr. Wakeham: In deciding which company to appoint as advertising agency for the flotation of the regional electricity campaign, I and the companies were advised by a panel of officials and advisers of Government Departments and the regional electricity companies. One of these advisers was Mr. Tim Bell the chairman of Lowe Bell Communications who are the Department's marketing advisers. Mr. Bell has provided general advice to the Conservative party.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what budgetary provision has been made for the cost of the advertising campaigns to promote the flotation of the electricity supply industry in England and Wales.

Mr. Wakeham: All expenses in respect of the advertising campaigns for the sale of the electricity supply industry will be met from the proceeds of the sale.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether any individual who has advised the Conservative party on advertising or public relations is involved in the company awarded the advertising contract for electricity privatisation.

Mr. Wakeham: The Government and the regional electricity companies have already announced the appointment of WCRS Mathews Marcantonio as advertising agency for the flotation of the companies. The chairman of the agency is Mr. Robin Wright who provided some advice on advertising issues to the Conservative party over two years ago.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy in the case of each of those companies advising him and also advising electricity boards on electricity privatisation what is the percentage of fees borne by his Department; and what was the equivalent percentage in 1988-89 and 1989-90.

Mr. Wakeham: Where the appointment is solely by the Department it meets 100 per cent. of the costs involved. Where, however, the appointment is made jointly by the Department and the industry, the costs are apportioned between the parties. The precise split in costs varies from contract to contract and is commercially confidential between the Department, the company or companies concerned and the firm of advisers appointed.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether before entering into a binding contract with an advertising agency for the campaigns to privatise the electricity supply industry on the basis of competitive tenders, the agency was given an indication of the likely budget for the campaigns.

Mr. Wakeham: No indication of the likely budget for the campaigns was provided.

Electricity Generation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what is the cost of one kilowatt hour of electricity generated by *(a)* coal, *(b)* oil, *(c)* gas and *(d)* nuclear power, respectively; and what are his Department's latest estimates for (i) wind power, (ii) wave power and (iv) tidal power.

Mr. Wakeham: The costs of generating electricity from coal, oil, nuclear and gas are a matter for the industries. The Department's latest estimates for wind, wave and tidal power are as contained in Energy Paper No. 55, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Mr. Andrew Balfour

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Don Valley on 6 March, *Official Report*, column *559*, whether he has yet made a decision in respect of the future career of Mr. Andrew Balfour.

Mr. Sainsbury: Mr. Balfour was informed by letter dated 16 March that he had been suspended from his duties in accordance with departmental regulations pending inquiries into what further action should be taken. Mr. Balfour has now replied formally. The case will be dealt with under internal diplomatic service procedures.

Bulgaria

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what commitment he has made on the provision of economic aid to Bulgaria following the elections on 10 June.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have made no commitment. What assistance we offer will depend on whether the elections on 10 and 17 June are free and fair and how far the new Government are committed to economic and political reform.

Civil Nuclear Affairs

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent changes there have been in the responsibilities of his Department for international civil nuclear affairs and safeguards matters.

Mr. Waldegrave: The overall responsibilities of this Department have not changed. There has, however, been an internal reorganisation, as a result of which non-proliferation and safeguards matters are handled by the non-proliferation department and civil nuclear matters are handled by the environment, science and energy department.

Hong Kong (Laboratory Tests)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to discuss with the appropriate authorities in the Crown territories of Hong Kong the introduction of a standardised laboratory testing scheme along the lines of the United Kingdom national measurement accreditation service.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. The Hong Kong Government have already introduced a laboratory accreditation scheme along the lines of the United Kingdom national measurement accreditation service (NAMAS) and this has entered into a mutual recognition agreement with NAMAS.

Nuclear Energy Safeguards

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which states, party to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, have nuclear energy programmes not within the safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency; and what steps have been taken to encourage such states to conclude such agreements with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Mr. Waldegrave: The only party to the non-proliferation treaty—the NPT—which has significant nuclear facilities and has not concluded a safeguards agreement with the IAEA is North Korea. We do not recognise North Korea as a state, but we have made clear our concern about the absence of a safeguards agreement, as required under article III of the NPT, at the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Libya

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any information concerning *(a)* the possession of and *(b)* attempts to produce nuclear weapons by Libya.

Mr. Waldegrave: No. Libya is a party to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and, as such, has undertaken not to manufacture or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons.

NATO Foreign Ministers

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all the items on the agenda for the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation Foreign Ministers meeting in Scotland on 7 and 8 June.

Mr. Waldegrave: This meeting will be an important opportunity to discuss the Vienna negotiations on conventional forces in Europe, and options for further conventional arms control; developments in east-west relations and the CSCE process; the security aspects of German unification; the need to adapt NATO in response to changes in Europe; and preparations for the NATO summit, to be held in London in early July. Ministers are also likely to consider the negotiations in confidence and security-building measures and "open skies"; nuclear issues; and NATO science, environment and fellowship programmes.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Council of Industry Ministers

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proposals he intends to put forward at the next European Ministers Industry Council.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: An Industry Council meeting was held on 28 May to discuss steel, shipbuilding, small and medium-sized enterprises and semiconductors. The next meeting is scheduled for 21 September, and at present I have no plans for the United Kingdom to table any proposals.

Environmental Audits

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has any plans to meet the chairman and the officials of the Co-op to discuss the utility of the recent Co-op decision to conduct a full environmental audit of its own brands.

Mr. Forth: Ministers have no plans to meet the chairman and officials of the Co-op to discuss their environmental audit. The Government have made clear their commitment to introduce an official environmental labelling scheme for consumer goods as soon as possible and recently announced the establishment of an advisory group to assist its development. In the meantime, the initiative of the Co-op to audit its own brand products is to be welcomed.

Rolls-Royce

Mr. Roger King: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has recently exercised his powers as special shareholder in Rolls-Royce plc.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Consent was given on behalf of the special shareholder to a resolution passed at the company's annual general meeting on 30 May amending article 43 of the articles of association which deals with United Kingdom control of the company. The amendment will facilitate the setting up of a depositary receipts programme by the company enabling foreign investors to purchase an interest in shares in Rolls-Royce more easily while maintaining the overall limit on foreign shareholdings of 29·5 per cent.

Securities and Investments Board

Mr. Burt: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has received a report from the Securities and Investments Board on the exercise of its functions under the Financial Services Act.

Mr. Redwood: A copy of the board's report, made in accordance with section 117 of the Act, was laid before Parliament yesterday. The report covers the period from 1 April 1989 to 31 March 1990. Copies are now available in the Library.

Departmental Savings

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what were the value-for-money savings in his Department's operations identified by internal audit and internal efficiency arrangements and by external audit and by management consultants retained by his Department between 1983-84 and 1988-89; and what is the amount of those savings fulfilled to date.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 5 June 1990]:* In my answer to another question from the hon. Member today, I described the mechanisms for identifying and tracking value-for-money savings within my Department. These mechanisms have been refined over the period referred to in the question. Prior to 1988-89, follow-up was specific to each of the mechanisms. Since 1988-89 the Department has been committed to achieving efficiency savings averaging at least 1·5 per cent. of departmental running costs each year over three years from these and other sources. In 1989-90 it is estimated that the Department achieved savings on running costs from all sources of 3·2 per cent. Savings aggregated centrally are not attributed to specific mechanisms: the figures requested cannot therefore be given.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what mechanisms exist in his Department for identifying and tracking value-for-money savings in its operations.

Mr. Forth *[holding answer 5 June 1990]:* The Department has a variety of efficiency review mechanisms such as efficiency scrutinies, staff inspection and internal audit. These include arrangements for follow-up action where they identify efficiency savings. In addition, the Department conducts an annual review of activity and resource management which takes into account in the allocation of resources the outcome of these reviews and other efficiency savings identified.

Research and Development

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will estimate the amount of money manufacturing industry spends on research and development, excluding military research, in the United Kingdom and its major industrial competitors.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Collection of separate figures for United Kingdom non-military research and development performed by manufacturing industry began only this year, relating to calendar year 1989. An analysis of the returns, prepared by the Central Statistical Office, is scheduled to be published during 1991. Data in the form requested are not available for the United Kingdom's major industrial competitors.

Bankruptcy

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many licences have existed to enable persons to act as trustees for the purposes of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985 for each year since 1985-86.

Mr. Redwood: The information is as follows:

Schedule of authorisations under the Insolvency Act 1986
Totals at the year end

	1987	*1988*	*1989*
Competent authority			
Secretary of State	48	62	84
Recognised professional bodies			
Insolvency Practitioners Association	226	225	265
Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales	790	860	970
Institute of Chartered Accountants in Scotland	175	184	205
Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland	85	93	100
Chartered Association of Certified Accountants	95	99	111
Law Society	63	70	97
Law Society of Scotland	25	31	33
	1,507	1,624	1,865

Food Storage (Temperature)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received about the refrigeration industry's ability to meet statutory temperature requirements for storage of food; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: My Department has participated in discussions between the refrigeration industry and the Department of Health, which is responsible for temperature requirements for food storage. Decisions about these will take account of the timely availability of suitable refrigeration equipment.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Tobacco Exports

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the answer of the Minister for Overseas Development on Monday 14 May, *Official Report*, column *596*, what action his Department is taking to look into the matter of British American Tobacco exports of cigarettes to the third world.

Mrs. Chalker: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes) on 24 May, at column *370*, which set out the Government's policy on aid to the tobacco sector. Aid funds are not used to finance imports of cigarettes and tobacco into developing countries. The Government have no plans at present for an inquiry into their export from the United Kingdom.

Brazil

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what matters were discussed with the Brazilian Environment Minister, Dr. José Lutzenberger, during his recent visit to the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Chalker: I had a very useful meeting with Dr. Lutzenberger. We discussed Brazil's environmental problems, including the preservation of the rain forests and the protection of the Indian population, the role of sustainable agriculture in conservation, and progress with the United Kingdom environmental co-operation programme with Brazil.

Nicaragua

Mr. Franks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further assistance he proposes to provide to the new Government in Nicaragua.

Mrs. Chalker: We plan to provide a grant of £600,000 in support of one or more sectors of the Nicaraguan economy. The offer will be made at the conference of aid donors to Nicaragua which is being held in Rome on 6 and 7 June.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Immigration

Mr. Hayward: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he intends to make changes in the immigration rules.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has today laid before Parliament a "Statement of Changes in the Immigration Rules", which removes Argentina and the German Democratic Republic from the list of countries whose nationals need visas for the United Kingdom. The changes come into effect on 8 June.

IBA (Transmission Functions)

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) of 8 May, *Official Report*, columns *32-33*, by what criteria it will be judged appropriate to remove the restrictions on British Telecom and the Channel 3 and 5 franchises.

Mr. Mellor: It is our intention to remove the ownership restrictions on British Telecom and the Channel 3 and 5 franchisees as soon as the United Kingdom broadcasting and telecommunications markets are sufficiently competitive to guard against the dangers of market domination and vertical integration.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received on his proposals to introduce ownership restrictions in respect of the transmission company which will replace the Independent Broadcasting Authority's transmission functions.

Mr. Mellor: We have received three representations in connection with the proposed ownership restrictions which were announced on 8 May.

Dog Fighting

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions were taken against those involved in dog fighting activities in 1989 and so far in the current year.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information is not available centrally.

Wandsworth Prison

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent discussions he has had with the Wandsworth branch of the Prison Officers Association on staffing levels at Wandsworth prison; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Lord Ferrers, visited Wandsworth in January and staffing levels were included in discussion with the local POA branch secretary. Since then, staffing levels have been discussed in the normal course between the governor and the local branch of the POA.

Television Licences

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* black and white and *(b)* colour television licences were issued in 1989.

Mr. Mellor: Licence issues are recorded by financial year. A total of 17·4 million colour and 2·2 million monochrome licences were issued in 1988-89. Figures for 1989-90 are expected in several weeks time.

TRANSPORT

School Buses

Mr. Jack: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the consultation paper, referred to in his answer of 14 November 1989 to the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson), *Official Report*, column *111*, on the requirement for a distinctive sign to be carried on school buses, will be issued; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Today. Draft regulations are being circulated to interested parties and their comments invited by 31 August.

The proposed regulations would require all buses—except those running scheduled services for the general public—to display a distinctive sign while carrying children to or from their school. They would also permit the fitting of flashing amber lights near such signs, and their use when children are getting on or off the bus.

The use of these signs will make a significant contribution to improving the safety of children using school buses. They will alert motorists to the fact that children are about and might be crossing the road. Motorists should exercise extra caution every time they overtake a stationary bus displaying the sign, whether or not it is equipped with the additional flashing lights.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced recently a wide programme of steps to promote safety of children on roads. We hope that, taken together, all these measures will help to bring about the reduction in child road deaths that we all want to see.

The regulations would also require better reflective rear markings on new large lorries in future. The new markings are much brighter than those required by the present British standard. They would have to meet the latest European standard, ECE regulation 70. The new markings would also be permitted on existing vehicles as an alternative to the Btitish standard markings, which were introduced nearly 20 years ago.

Rush-hour Traffic

Mr. Gerald Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate the saving in costs of road building, road maintenance, policing and congestion if the volume of rush-hour traffic in our major cities were reduced by 10 per cent.

Mr. Atkins: I am not aware of any estimates which have been made on this matter.

Motor Insurers Bureau

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list the number of claims registered with the Motor Insurers Bureau in each year since the operation of the voluntary agreement; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has any plans to review the operation of the voluntary agreement entered into by the Motor Insurers Bureau; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will list the average period of time taken to deal with claimants applying to the Motor Insurers Bureau in each year since the operation of the voluntary agreement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The numbers of claims submitted to the Motor Insurers Bureau each year under its agreements with the Secretary of State are listed in the table. The figure for 1989 includes 3,154 claims for property damage only, which are admissible under the revised uninsured drivers agreement which came into force on 31 December 1988.

Year	*Number*
1946	547
1947	
1948	436
1949	320
1950	357
1951	402
1952	400
1953	448
1954	434
1955	503
1956	581
1957	592
1958	667
1959	808
1960	943
1961	1,131
1962	1,268
1963	1,207
1964	1,393
1965	1,883
1966	1,930
1967	2,106
1968	2,443
1969	2,208
1970	2,759
1971	2,618
1972	3,172
1973	3,164
1974	3,718
1975	3,667
1976	3,669
1977	4,153
1978	4,462
1979	4,409
1980	5,312
1981	5,098
1982	5,363
1983	6,326
1984	6,028
1985	7,000
1986	8,854
1987	9,596
1988	10,208
1989	14,392

I understand that claims to the bureau settled in the first three months of 1990 took on average approximately 10 months from receipt to settlement. The agreements have been revised from time to time since the bureau was formed in 1946. I have no plans to revise the present arrangements.

Transport Fuels

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to commission a study along the lines of that undertaken by the United States Department of Energy and Argonne National Laboratories, published by the United States national technical information service, on the potential for reducing atmospheric pollution from transport vehicles through the introduction of alternative transport fuels.

Mr. Atkins: The options, including the potential for using alternative fuels, to further reduce pollution from motor vehicles are currently being reviewed. This may lead to the commissioning of more detailed assessments to complement the results of existing national and international research.

Reprocessed Waste (Transport)

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what studies have been commissioned by his Department in regard to the design and development of transport flasks or other containers for the movement of vitrified high-level waste back to its countries of origin, following reprocessing.

Mr. Atkins: Design and development studies are undertaken by the consigners, who then submit them to the Department for independent assessment. Shipments of vitrified high-level waste by any mode of transport will be required to be carried in containers which have been approved and certified by my Department as fully complying with stringent national and international safety regulations.

Roads

Mr. Blair: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his Department's planned expenditure on road construction and repair for *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* the north of England and *(c)* County Durham in the present financial year.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 5 June 1990]:* Planned expenditure on trunk road construction and repair in 1990-91 is as follows:

	£ million
England	1,808·1
North of England	342·1
County Durham	5·2

Figures for any single year are a poor indicator of the geographical balance of the programme. The road programme contains schemes in the north worth £2·9 billion (works cost, November 1987 prices) amounting to one quarter of the total for England. Major improvements to the A167 in County Durham form part of this programme.

HEALTH

Medicines Control Agency

Mr. Rost: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the Medicines Control Agency is included among those autonomous agencies, as defined by Treasury documents Cm. 914, on "The Financing and Accountability of Next Steps Agencies", published in December 1989.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No.

Mr. Rost: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) under what statutory authority he has ruled that the Medicines Control Agency may not charge turnover-related fees;

(2) whether the Medicines Control Agency may charge turnover-based fees;

(3) why a system of turnover-related fees has not been adopted by the Medicines Control Agency, as authorised by the Medicines Act 1988.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No ruling has been given prohibiting the MCA from charging turnover-related fees. In order to meet the criteria for exemption from gross running cost control the agency has to be self financing from receipts which vary in line with the demand for its services. Another requirement was that such fees had to be seen as related to the cost of the services provided: a turnover-related levy could not satisfy this criterion.

Mr. Rost: To ask the Secretary of State for Health under what statutory authority the Medicines Control Agency budget for 1990-91 is projected to make a net profit.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Medicines (Fixing of Fees Relating to Medicinal Products for Human Use) Order 1989 SI 1989 No. 684 sets out the matters to be taken into account in setting fees under the Medicines Act 1971. There is no statutory requirement to make a net profit, but any past deficit is subsequently recovered.

Mr. Rost: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will define the interpretation and meaning of the exemption from gross running costs control, applied to the operation of the Medicines Control Agency.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The meaning of running cost control and of exemption from such control is explained in paragraph 21.3.10 of the 1990 public expenditure White Paper (Cm. 1021). The Medicines Control Agency, while remaining part of the Department of Health, may be exempted from gross running cost control provided certain conditions are met, one of which is that its costs, excluding British Pharmacopoeia Commission activities, are recovered from fees payable by licence holders and applicants. Like other parts of the Department, the MCA is required to submit a bid for funds each year. The effect of exemption from gross running cost control is that, once funds have been voted by Parliament, the MCA will not be subject to a reduction in those funds, otherwise than by supplementary estimates submitted to and approved by Parliament or other parliamentary instructions.

Mr. Rost: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the statutory instruments or other legislation which sets out the establishment and basis of the existence of the Medicines Control Agency.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No statutory instrument or other legislation was needed to establish the Medicines Control Agency.

Mr. Rost: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the projected revenue, gross running costs and net profit or loss for the Medicines Control Agency for 1990-91.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The latest published figures are contained in the Department of Health supply estimates 1990-91 dated 20 March 1990, copies of which are available in the Library. The forecast net profit or loss figures for 1990-91 are not yet available. They await the completion of the agency's accounts for the year to 31 March 1990.

Mr. Rost: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when, and by what authority, the Medicines Control Agency became, or is proposed to become, an autonomous agency.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Medicines Control Agency is not an autonomous agency but remains part of the Department of Health. No decision has been taken on whether in due course it might become a next steps agency.

Mr. Rost: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how his Department has applied the provisions of the Health and Medicines Act 1988 in relation to the charging of licence fees for medicines on the turnover of a company and of a product as well as on a fixed basis, and authorisation of the Medicines Control Agency to fix charges on those criteria.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Until 31 March 1989 fees in relation to applications for licences or certificates under the Medicines Act 1968 were charged on two bases—an annual fee or turnover levy related to the turnover of licensed products and capital fees in relation to particular applications payable on submission of the application. From 1 April 1989 the annual fee was abolished.

Section 21 of the Health and Medicines Act 1988 clarified the basis under which regulations could be made in relation to an annual fee and also validated the basis on which previous annual fees had been charged.

Mr. Rost: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines setting out their relationship and terms of reference for the operation of the Medicines Control Agency have been issued by him.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The Medicines Control Agency was set up from 1 April 1989 following the

recommendations of the Evans Cunliffe report on the control of medicines. I refer my hon. Friend to the reply my right hon. Friend the then Minister for Health gave my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Maples) on 14 April 1988 at column *206*, indicating the particular recommendations which were accepted as the basis of the agency's operations.

Nurses (Regrading)

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many nurses are awaiting decisions on their regrading nationally, and in the Norwich health authority; and in each case, what percentage they are of total nurse employment.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not collected centrally.

Operating Theatre Closures

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give by region the number of operating theatres closed in 1989.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Hospital Closures

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give by region the number of hospitals closed *(a)* wholly and *(b)* partly during 1989.

Mr. Dorrell: The table gives the numbers of hospitals or facilities which we are aware were approved for closure in total or in part in 1989. It is important to bear in mind that closures are often balanced by openings or other reprovision.

Region	*(a) Whole*	*(b) Part*
Northern	2	5
Yorkshire	4	2
Trent	13	7
East Anglia	1	—
North West Thames	1	1
North East Thames	2	—
South East Thames	4	5
South West Thames	2	3
Wessex	4	—
Oxford	2	11
South Western	4	2
West Midlands	6	5
Mersey	5	3
North Western	5	2

NHS Trusts

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on what basis he will set the annual financing limit for each national health service hospital trust.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State will set the external financing limit for each trust annually in the light of the trust's business plan and available resources.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the target number of national health service trusts to be developed for ministerial approval set by the national health service management executive in its 1990-91 operational programme.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The NHS management executive has indicated that it aims to develop for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State's approval approximately 50 NHS trusts. There is no firm target and some 80 Health Service units currently intend to prepare applications for NHS trust status in April 1991, subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary legislation.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish the financial proformas to be submitted by national health service trust status applicants.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No. The supporting financial statements to be submitted by applicants for NHS trust status will include detailed information on their financial plans which it would not be appropriate to make publicly available.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list those potential first-wave trusts identified by the Department's analysis of regions short-term programmes as having problems eliminating underlying deficits in 1990-91.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No. The NHS management executive is engaged in continuing discussions with regional health authorities. Such information is not yet available.

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans his Department has to employ outside consultants to evaluate national health service trust applications.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Outside consultants will assist the Department in the analysis of financial management and information systems in potential NHS trusts as part of the assessment of trust applications when the necessary legislation has been passed.

District Health Authority Allocations

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list for each district health authority its *(a)* population, *(b)* revenue allocation, *(c)* capital allocation, *(d)* revenue allocation expressed as a sum per head of population and *(e)* capital allocation expressed as a sum per head of population.

Mr. Dorrell: Financial allocations are made to regional health authorities. Information is not held centrally about allocations made by regions to their districts.

Blood

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will identify for each national health service region the value of sales of blood and blood products outside national health service services.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 23 May 1990]:* Health authorities make a handling charge designed to recover the costs of supplying whole blood and blood components to non-NHS hospitals. No charge is made for the blood itself which is freely donated by volunteer donors.

Information derived from the annual accounts of health authorities for 1988-89 (the latest available) is as follows:

Income from blood handling charges

Region	*(£)*
Northern	17,930
Yorkshire	61,198
Trent	66,069
East Anglia	67,564
North West Thames	621,618
North East Thames	82,686
South East Thames South West Thames	474,276
Essex	87,733
Oxford	92,085
South Western	92,833
West Midlands	203,333
Mersey	19,597
North Western	93,725
Totals	1,980,647

Information on the sales of blood products manufactured by the bio-products laboratory, whether to NHS or non-NHS hospitals is commercially confidential.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Community Charge

Mr. Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will set out the net weekly and marginal tax rate spending of *(a)* a single person, *(b)* a married couple, one working, *(c)* a man and wife and two children, one parent working, whose wage was £50, £100, £150 and £200, respectively, after taking into account income tax and national insurance and any benefits or rebates to which they could be entitled (i) before 1 April and (ii) after 1 April, to show the effect of the introduction of the community charge.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The answer is set out in the tables. It should be noted that the results in the tables remain arbitrary. They cannot reflect, except by chance, the actual circumstances of particular people and cannot claim to be representative of the population at large. The tables use hypothetical community charges and rents, so they do not reflect the full range of community charge and housing costs which people can pay.

	Net weekly income		*Net weekly income after housing costs and community charge*		*Marginal deduction rate*	
	October 1989	*April 1990*	*October 1989*	*April 1990*	*October 1989*	*April 1990*
Single person						
Gross earnings (per week)						
50	65·69	68·19	39·69	41·77	86	82
100	82·4	83·67	56·6	57·25	34	34
150	115·4	116·67	89·6	90·25	34	34
200	148·4	149·67	122·6	123·25	34	34
Married couple						
Gross earnings (per week)						
50	72·81	79·17	47·01	46·04	90	90
100	92·88	102·92	67·08	69·79	90	87
150	123·04	127·08	97·24	93·95	34	44
200	156·04	157·94	130·24	124·81	34	34
Married couple, two children (assumed aged 5 and 12)						
Gross earnings (per week)						
50	131·86	143·05	101·06	106·15	86	82
100	134·22	146·55	103·42	109·65	84	80
150	143·57	154·96	112·77	118·06	80	80
200	170·54	173·14	139·74	136·24	34	34

Note.—The methods and assumptions are those used in the published Tax/Benefit Model Tables except that from April 1990 community charge is assumed at £350 per annum and assumed national average rents have been inflated for 1990.

Residential Care

Miss Widdecombe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he intends to publish the Government's response to the second report of the House of Commons Social Services Committee of the current Session, on the future funding of private and voluntary residential care.

Mr. Newton: The response was laid before Parliament yesterday.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will give figures for spending on income support for people living in private residential care in Sunderland for each year from 1985 including the first quarter of 1990;

(2) if he will give the number of people in Sunderland who are in receipt of income support and who are living in private residential care for each year since 1985 including the first quarter of 1990.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I regret that information in the form requested is not available.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the number of people in Sunderland who are in receipt of attendance allowance for 1988, 1989 and the first quarter of 1990; and how many receive payments from the independent living fund.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is not available.

Severe Disability Premium

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the number of people in Sunderland who are in receipt of severe disability premium for 1988 and 1989.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. O

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the reasons for the delays in resolving the case of Mr. O reference RM173P/C0999/71/83/3; and what steps have been taken to resolve this case.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I regret that we are unable to identify this case from the information supplied. If the hon. Member will let me have full details I shall be pleased to look into the matter.

Disallowed Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what information is available regarding the duration of periods of unemployment benefit disqualification imposed in each quarter since April 1989.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: No information is available on the duration of periods of unemployment benefit disqualification since April 1989.

Income Support

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Birkenhead, (Mr. Field), on 8 May, *Official Report*, column *87*, what was the proportion and number of income support and unemployment benefit claimants who (i) successfully and (ii) unsuccessfully claimed reduced income support under the hardship rules in each month since 9 October 1989 and, for each category, the numbers whose claim was in doubt due to *(a)* actively seeking work, *(b)* availability and *(c)* restricted availability, and the numbers in each case whose claim was awaiting adjudication, had been disallowed, or was subsequently allowed; and if he will break the figures down by region.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The statistics kept are given in the table. The remainder of the information requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Hardship payments of income support to claimants who were not available for full time work or who had not actively sought work

Social Security Region	*North East*	*Midlands*	*London North*	*London South*	*Wales and South West*	*North West*	*Scotland*	*National Total*
Number of hardship payments where claimant:								
October 1989								
Was unavailable[1]:								
Awards made	20	12	37	32	41	23	13	178
Awards refused	12	10	12	15	38	15	10	112
Did not actively seek work:								
Awards made	4	5	12	2	5	3	12	43
Awards refused	1	4	0	5	3	3	11	27
November 1989								
Was unavailable[1]:								
Awards made	17	16	78	71	27	13	19	241
Awards refused	17	13	14	16	35	15	11	121
Did not actively seek work:								
Awards made	3	8	16	14	8	3	29	81
Awards refused	1	2	1	11	6	3	14	38
December 1989								
Was unavailable[1]:								
Awards made	41	17	223	35	33	14	16	379
Awards refused	12	8	10	16	15	10	6	77
Did not actively seek work:								
Awards made	5	5	23	9	7	3	7	59
Awards refused	3	3	2	1	4	1	1	15
January 1990								
Was unavailable[1]:								
Awards made	30	18	56	42	61	11	17	235
Awards refused	9	7	17	11	39	12	19	114
Did not actively seek work:								
Awards made	5	5	29	7	10	4	6	66
Awards refused	1	3	5	1	2	4	7	23
February 1990								
Was unavailable[1]:								
Awards made	33	10	70	28	28	21	23	213
Awards refused	9	5	12	4	26	8	23	87
Did not actively seek work:								
Awards made	7	11	19	6	9	2	4	58
Awards refused	6	3	3	1	2	0	2	17

Social Security Region	North East	Midlands	London North	London South	Wales and South West	North West	Scotland	National Total
March 1990								
Was unavailable[1]:								
Awards made	27	10	78	24	29	24	30	222
Awards refused	8	7	17	7	20	10	12	81
Did not actively seek work:								
Awards made	11	3	27	10	18	3	14	86
Awards refused	0	3	4	2	8	3	1	21
April 1990								
Was unavailable[1]:								
Awards made	37	13	39	13	41	20	13	176
Awards refused	18	9	3	4	16	8	4	62
Did not actively seek work:								
Awards made	5	3	15	10	8	3	1	45
Awards refused	1	0	5	15	4	4	3	32

[1] Includes unavailability for total or part week, and unreasonable restriction on occupation where appropriate.
Notes: 1. All figures are provisional and subject to amendment.
2. No individual figure in the table exceeds 0·01 per cent. of the latest available number of Income Support claimants.

Actively Seeking Work Test

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps have been and are being taken to improve liaison between adjudication officers in the Departments of Employment and Social Security in respect of adjudication on actively seeking work; and if he will make a statement on the process of adjudication in both Departments on claimants whose actively seeking work is brought into question, and the benefit sanctions which can be imposed by the staff in each Department before and after adjudication.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Instructions are in place to ensure close liaison between the Department and the employment service. These instructions are kept under review.

When a doubt arises as to whether a claimant is actively seeking work unemployment benefit is suspended for the weeks of doubt, usually the two weeks since the claimant was last paid. The case is then referred to an employment service adjudication officer to make a decision on title to unemployment benefit. If only income support is in payment he gives an opinion. If he decides that the claimant did not actively seek work, unemployment benefit will be disallowed. His decision/opinion is passed to the Department of Social Security adjudication officer to help him decide what income support should be paid. This happens for each fortnight during which the claimant fails to fulfil the actively seeking work condition.

The Department of Social Security adjudication officer has to decide entitlement to income support, and, if awaiting the employment service adjudication officer's decision/opinion, will assume it to be adverse to the claimant. Income support will then be withdrawn until such time as he satisfies the adjudication officer that he is again actively seeking work. If, in the adjudication officer's opinion, hardship will result, income support reduced by 40 per cent. of the personal allowance element can be paid. If the employment service adjudication officer's subsequent decision/opinion is that the claimant did actively seek work, arrears of benefit can be paid.

Wath upon Dearne Office

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what expenditure has been incurred in the maintenance or improvement of the Wath upon Dearne office of his Department during the last five years; and what further expenditure on this office is planned.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Expenditure incurred over the last five years has been as follows:

Year	Expenditure (£)
1985-86	10,581
1986-87	39,444
1987-88	53,173
1988-89	65,530
1989-90	103,713
Total	272,441

The projected expenditure for 1990-91 is around £18,000.

Rotherham Offices

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total number of persons employed at each of the offices of his Department within the metropolitan borough of Rotherham.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The total number of such persons employed on 30 May 1990 was 278. This figure consists of 74·5 staff employed in Rotherham North and 203·5 in Rotherham South local offices.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list for each month since October 1989 the number of *(a)* successful and *(b)* unsuccessful appeals by unemployed claimants against benefit sanctions arising from (i) actively seeking work, (ii) refusal of employment and (iii) restricted availability by social security region; and if he will make arrangements to place these decisions and future decisions in the Library.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Information on unemployment benefit appeals is not available for any period later than

the quarter ending 30 September 1989. Moreover statistics are not routinely produced showing the breakdown of decisions within an overall benefit category.

The publication of decisions of the social security appeal tribunals is a matter for the president of the social security and medical appeal tribunals, his Honour Judge Holden, and the hon. Member may wish to contact him direct.

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the number of energy audits carried out in his Department in the last five years and for each audit a statement of its main conclusions.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 5 June 1990]:* Information is not readily available for the years 1985-86 and 1986-87. During the subsequent three years energy surveys were carried out in 30 DH/DSS buildings. The main conclusions are shown as follows:

1. Convert tungsten lighting to compact fluorescent lighting.
2. Adjust boiler controls to avoid overheating during occupancy.
3. Adjust boiler controls to eliminate unnecessary heating during silent hours.
4. Install water meters.
5. Install controls to restrict the flow of water to taps and urinals.
6. Change fluorescent tubes to a high efficacy type.
7. Improve number of switches available to staff to enable them to control their lighting.
8. Remedy defects to window frames.
9. Maintain records of the utilities.
10. Display "Energy Management" posters for publicity.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give for each year from 1978 the energy consumption, broken down by fuel, of the buildings occupied by his Department, expressing the figures in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* 1978-79 money terms and *(c)* units of consumption for electricity in kilowatt hours, gas in therms, liquid fuel in litres and solid fuel in tonnes.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard *[holding answer 5 June 1990]:* Information is only available for DH/DSS jointly, from the financial year 1985-86. The figures are in the table.

	Year			
	1985-86	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*
Cash terms (£ million)	11·76	9·68	9·8	9·95
1985-86 money terms (£ million)	11·76	10·09	10·73	9·86
Therms (million)	13·54	8·5	8·4	7·8
kWh (million)	110	110	130	130
Litres (million)	9·5	9·05	9·05	4·6
Tonnes	7,314	8,230	7,077	4,250

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether the Duchy intends to appoint a dedicated energy manager devoted to energy management; and what advice he provides to leaseholders of Duchy-owned buildings about energy efficiency.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Duchy has no plans to appoint a dedicated manager devoted to energy management, or to offer advice to its leaseholders about energy efficiency. Under the terms of lease Duchy tenants are responsible for their own energy management and consumption.

ENVIRONMENT

Water Supplies (North-East)

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many households in the north-east were disconnected from their water supplies in 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Information on disconnections is available by water company areas only. The numbers of household disconnections by the former Northumbrian and Yorkshire water authorities and by the statutory water companies (SWCs) operating in their areas were as follows:

	1987-88	*1988-89*
Northumbrian WA	480	770
Yorkshire WA	560	945
SWCs[1]		
Hartlepools	n/a	120
Newcastle	n/a	558
Sunderland	n/a	70
York	n/a	79

[1] Total disconnections, household and non-household.

Clinical Waste

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities have facilities for the collection of clinical waste.

Mr. Trippier: My Department is currently conducting a review of clinical waste management systems, but there is no comprehensive information available at present. Every waste collection authority has a duty to collect all clinical waste that is also household waste and a duty to collect any such commercial waste if requested to do so.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities charge for the collection of clinical waste from *(a)* private nursing homes, *(b)* voluntary sector residential homes and *(c)* private dwellings under the Collection and Disposal of Waste Regulations 1988; and on what basis each local authority charges for its collections.

Mr. Trippier: Information on local authority charges is not held centrally. DOE circular 13/88 (Welsh Office circular 19/88) advises local authorities that charges should be realistic and should have a direct relationship to the cost of providing the service.

Local Government Officers

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what number of people will be excluded by the change of qualifying date to 1 April 1986 from buying back reckonable service under the local government officers' superannuation scheme.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: This information is not available.

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the total cost of providing pensions for part-time local government officers who retired between 1974 and 1 April 1986.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: It is not possible to provide an estimate, since the number of retired officers concerned is not known.

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment for what reason the original qualifying date of 1974 for the superannuation scheme for local government officers was replaced by a new qualifying date of 1 April 1986.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: When pensions for part-time employees in local government were first established by the Local Government Superannuation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations 1987 it was not possible to backdate them beyond 1 April 1986 because of the destruction of pay records for earlier years and the need to avoid double payment of pensions where employees had been contributors to SERPS. For similar reasons, it will not be possible to apply the new draft regulations now being circulated for purchase of added years before that date.

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to finalise the regulations to permit part-time local government officers to join the superannuation scheme.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Part-time local government officers were first admitted to the local government superannuation scheme under the terms of the Local Government Superannuation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations 1987. Further regulations to allow these employees to purchase additional service at a concessionary rate are currently the subject of consultation with local government. It is hoped to make them as soon as possible once the responses to the consultation have been considered.

Shetland Seabirds

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the research projects commissioned by the Nature Conservancy Council into the breeding failure of Shetland seabirds, together with relevant dates and sums allocated.

Mr. Trippier: The information is as follows:

	Funds allocated £
1986-87	
Survey of Skuas in Shetland	700
Development of monitoring methods	24,700
Breeding performance of terns in Shetland	2,000
1987-88	
The role of food supply in the breeding success of arctic terns in Shetland	10,800
Breeding performance of Hermaness seabirds	300
Development of monitoring methods	28,300
1988-89	
The role of food supply in the breeding success of arctic terns	8,348
Seminar on Shetland sandeels and seabirds	500
Breeding performance of Hermaness seabirds	400
Skua breeding performance in Shetland	2,000
Development of monitoring methods	29,993
1989-90	
The role of food supply in the breeding success of arctic terns	8,000
Breeding performance of Hermaness seabirds	400
Skua breeding performance in Shetland	3,500
Seabird monitoring programme	33,600
1990-91	
Study of sandeel biology in waters around Shetland	35,000
Seabird monitoring programme	35,000
Breeding performance of Hermaness seabirds	465
Skua breeding performance in Shetland	300

Attlebridge Tip, Norfolk

Mr. John Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what toxic substances are dumped in the tip at Attlebridge, Norfolk.

Mr. Trippier: The responsibility for determining which substances may be deposited at waste disposal facilities rests with the disposal authority who exercise this control through the conditions of the site licence. The Control of Pollution Act 1974 requires that each disposal authority maintains, for public inspection, a register containing copies of all disposal licences issued by that authority and currently in force. I suggest, therefore, that the hon. Member should apply to Norfolk county council for the information he seeks.

Toxic Wastes

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the text of the recent letter sent to the Major of Rotherham, Councillor Ron Hughes, by his right hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside concerning his Department's involvement in the problem of toxic wastes imported to Wath Recycling in Rotherham.

Mr. Trippier: Councillor Hughes wrote to me, at the close of his year of office as Mayor of Rotherham, seeking an announcement about a solution to the problem of imported wastes at Wath Recycling. I replied to him on 18 May explaining that we have been working closely with the United States Environmental Protection Agency to secure a settlement between the parties to avoid lengthy litigation. This involves a programme of action to secure the return of as much waste as possible to the USA and to deal with the remainder in an environmentally sound manner. Agreement to any such programme still depends on a number of aspects under investigation.

I invited Councillor Hughes and local hon. Members to make my letter public if they wished and I am sending the hon. Member a copy.

Electro-osmosis

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he possesses on the process developed at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and recently made public, to clean up contaminated soils of hazardous waste substances using a technique called electro-osmosis.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My officials are aware of the MIT process and have been monitoring its progress. There have been commercial applications involving electro-osmosis in the United Kingdom but not so far involving the treatment of contaminated land.

Landslides

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment has been made by his Department, or consultants to his Department, of the dangers posed from potential landslides; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moynihan: The Department has been actively commissioning research on landslides since the mid-1970s and is continuing so to do. A list of relevant projects is appended to this answer. Initially work was concentrated in the valleys of the south Wales coalfield, where landslides had been known to cause problems for many years.

However, in 1984, it was recognised that the information on landsliding in Britain as a whole was deficient and a national review of research into landsliding in Great Britain which aimed to discover what work had been done on landslides in Britain, to assess its general applicability and to identify any gaps in knowledge and priorities for any further work needed was undertaken. This review was completed towards the end of 1987. The detailed results are available in the Department's library and a summary report will shortly be published.

The results of this work have assisted in providing the basis for planning policy guidance (PPG 14) on development on unstable land which was issued by my Department and the Welsh Office on 30 April.

Research on landslides funded by the Department of the Environment

South Wales coalfield landslip survey
Institute of Geological Sciences 1977-80

A study of two landslipped areas in the South Wales coalfield
Institute of Geological Sciences 1981-83

East Pentwyn and Bournville landslips research project
Sir William Halcrow and Partners 1983-85

Assessment of landslip potential South Wales
Sir William Halcrow and Partners 1984-86

Stability and hydrogeology of deep mineral Workings
The Geoffrey Walton Practice 1984-86

Review of research into landsliding in Great Britain
Geomorphological Services Limited 1984-87

Landslides database and publications
Geomorphological Services Limited 1988-90

Rhondda landslip potential assessment
Sir William Halcrow and Partners 1988-90

Landslips and undermining
Sir William Halcrow and Partners 1987-90

Coastal landslip potential assessment Isle of Wight Undercliff, Ventnor
Geomorphological Services Limited 1988-90

Handbook on the design of tips and backfilled areas in quarries
The Geoffrey Walton Practice 1989-90.

Greenhouse Effect

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research is being undertaken for his Department on the greenhouse effect by the James Rennel centre for ocean circulation at Southampton university.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Department is not commissioning any research at the James Rennell centre for ocean circulation at this time. The centre is currently being established by the natural environment research council at Southampton university with funding from the science budget. It will open in October 1990.

Romanian Oil Refineries

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration he has given to making available pollution control expertise gained in the United Kingdom oil industry to Romania to assist in environmental clean up of the oil refineries in Ploiesti.

Mr. Trippier: The extent of the environmental damage by the communist regimes in eastern Europe requires international assistance. The United Kingdom is acting primarily through a joint programme co-ordinated by the European Commission. This programme is expected to extend to Romania. In the United Kingdom the oil industry would no doubt consider requests by the Romanian Government where it could offer practical assistance.

Atmospheric Conditions (Monitoring)

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) pursuant to the answer of 1 May, *Official Report*, columns *502-3*, if he will give comparable figures on nitrogen dioxide, ozone and acidity of rain at each of the monitoring sites then in operation for each year since 1979; (2) pursuant to the answer of 1 May, *Official Report*, columns *502-3*, if he will give comparable figures for suphur dioxide concentrations in each region for every year since 1979.

Mr. Trippier: The information requested is in the table. Additional data have been published in the relevant Department of the Environment scientific review group and other reports: "Ozone in the United Kingdom" (United Kingdom photochemical oxidants review group), "Acidity in United Kingdom Fresh Waters" (United Kingdom acid waters review group second report), "Acid Deposition in the United Kingdom" (United Kingdom review group on acid rain second report) and "Lake Acidification in the United Kingdom" (paleoecology research unit, University College London). Copies of these publications have been placed in the Library of the House.

A. NO_2 annual mean (am) and 98th percentile (98 percentile): Units: parts per billion (ppb).

Site	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
EC Directive sites											
Central London											
am	34	33	35	43	39	43	32	35	39	35	39
98 percentile	64	66	71	110	73	81	63	64	85	74	80
West London											
am	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	35	37	42
98 percentile	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	84	92	112
Glasgow											
am	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	31	30	27
98 percentile	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	69	57	61
Manchester											
am	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	29	28	25
98 percentile	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	65	67	62
Walsall											
am	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	30	26	29
98 percentile	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	62	54	59
Billingham											
am	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	23	21	22
98 percentile	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	63	58	60
Non Directive sites:											
Cromwell Road											
am	36	—	—	46	68	50	48	40	—	—	45
98 percentile	82	—	—	117	209	119	128	109	—	—	105
Stevenage											
am	24	18	19	22	20	23	—	21	27	24	25
98 percentile	71	43	50	54	47	57	—	52	72	53	56

B. Ozone: exceedances of 60ppb hourly average

Site	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
Stevenage	64	11	7	242	178	324	108	89	36	10	85
Central London	29	15	31	10	6	6	146	68	9	3	74
Sibton	66	2	358	157	207	72	63	—	46	76	212
Aston Hill	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	47	45	83	143
Lullington Heath	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	106	112	401
Strath Vaigh	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	32	53	28
High Muffles	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	49	184
Lough Navar	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	34	49	74
Yarner Wood	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	21	51	360
Ladybower	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	20	173
Harwell	—	—	—	—	117	173	70	77	51	16	170
Bottesford	503	458	54	238	138	201	94	93	59	10	82
Bush	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	11	53	33	63
Eskdalemuir	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	30	49	28	99
Great Dun Fell	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	96	167	131	204
Wharley Croft	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	21	36	34	129
Glazebury	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	22	39

C. Acidity of rain as precipitation weighted mean acidity in microgramme equivalents per litre:

Site	1986	1987	1988	1989
Achanarras	—	19	25	25
Strath Vaigh Dam	—	16	16	13
River Mharcaidh	22	22	21	20
Glen Dye	—	45	46	36
Balquhidder	21	32	24	20
Whiteadder	40	36	47	35
Eskdalemuir	21	25	27	20
Redesdale	41	44	52	33
Loch Dee	29	23	19	15
Cow Green Reservoir	27	31	34	23
Bannisdale	30	27	28	24
High Muffles	—	63	72	55
Thorganby	75	73	88	84
Jenny Hurn	89	100	85	64
Driby	42	43	42	47
Wardlow Hay Cop	29	45	33	37

Site	1986	1987	1988	1989
Beddgelert	17	19	17	15
Bottesford	61	76	81	48
Plynlimon	—	15	11	14
Stoke Ferry	35	36	30	40
Preston Montford	18	25	25	36
Llyn Brianne	16	21	18	19
Tycanol Wood	16	17	15	18
Woburn	45	51	37	37
Flatford Mill	33	43	35	35
Compton	25	28	16	25
Barcombe Mills	19	22	13	15
Yarner Wood	17	20	14	20
Goonhilly	20	23	15	19
Lough Navar	11	10	10	10
Hillsborough Forest	—	—	—	13
Isle of Man	28	34	27	24

D. *SO_2 concentrations by region*
Units: micrograms per cubic meter

Region	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88
Scotland	60	49	53	40	40	43	38	36	32
North	54	42	43	35	33	30	30	33	35
North West	84	63	63	49	48	44	39	38	41
Yorks/Humber	86	69	78	68	67	59	57	51	50
East Midlands	76	58	65	54	54	47	45	47	46
West Midlands	73	61	64	54	57	49	44	44	39
Wales	48	41	39	35	35	36	28	26	24
East Anglia	51	50	50	35	34	28	25	27	24
London	78	68	66	55	47	48	39	42	37
South East	57	50	46	39	37	38	37	37	31
South West	49	45	43	37	35	34	37	34	25
Northern Ireland	47	40	47	56	46	58	64	70	67

Parish Councils

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek powers to apply section 28 of the Local Government Act 1972 to England.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer, 5 June 1990]:* No: there seem to be no compelling reason to change the present arrangements in England for creating or dissolving parish councils.

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give for each year from 1978 the energy consumption broken down by fuel, of the buildings occupied by his Department, expressing the figures in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* 1978-79 money terms and *(c)* units of consumption for electricity in kilowatt hours, gas in therms, liquid fuel in litres and solid fuel in tonnes.

Mr. Chris Patten *[holding answer 5 June 1990]:* Information on my Department's energy consumption is not available in the form requested. New monitoring systems not in place will ensure that detailed consumption information will be available in the future and will assist in measuring the success of our energy conservation programme.

Sewage Works

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all outstanding applications for *(a)* long sea outfalls, and *(b)* sewage treatment works.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 17 May 1990]:* Responsibility for granting consents for discharges made by the water services companies rests with the National Rivers Authority. This responsibility includes the determination of all undetermined applications submitted to the Department by the former water authorities which, under the transitional provisions of the Water Act 1989, are treated as if they had been made by the water services company to the National Rivers Authority.

The only exceptions to these are applications that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has called in for his own consideration. In the case of sewage treatment works, these were applications from the former water authorities for time-limited consents for those works covered by the accelerated improvement programme announced by my hon. and learned Friend the then Minister for Housing and Planning on 7 December 1988 at column *199*. All but those listed have been determined and my Department will shortly be writing to all objectors informing them of the outcome of each application.

Anglian Water Authority—Bletsoe and Newton Blossomville
Severn Trent Water Authority—Baschurch
North West Water Authority—Rossendale and Rochdale

Details of all outstanding applications are available from the public registers held by the National Rivers Authority.

The Department has no outstanding applications in respect of discharge consents for long sea outfalls.

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the information collected by the Property Services Agency about the use of energy in Government buildings.

Mr. Chope: The PSA collects no information about the use of energy in Government buildings, apart from that

required for its own energy management purposes. Responsibility for energy management rests with individual Departments and, centrally, with the Department of Energy.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Neil Hamilton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will confirm the charge cap of Hillingdon borough council.

Mr. Chris Patten: I have today laid before the House of Commons a draft order under section 104 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 stating that the amount ("the cap") which Hillingdon's budget for 1990-91 is not to exceed is £141,700,000. If the House approves the draft I shall make the order and serve on the council as soon as reasonably practicable thereafter a notice confirming the amount of Hillingdon's final cap. The way will then be clear for the council to set a new, lower budget within the capped amount and for the charge payers of Hillingdon to benefit from the lower charge that will ensue.

WALES

Cardiff Bay Development Corporation (Chief Executive)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what advice or instructions were given by his Department to the board of the Cardiff Bay development corporation concerning the appointment of a chief executive in 1987-88; and if he will list his powers and responsibilities in relation to such appointments.

Mr. David Hunt: Under the provisions of schedule 26 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 sole responsibility for the appointment of the chief executive rests with the Cardiff Bay development corporation.

Wrexham Maelor Hospital

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will decide whether to authorise a subsidiary dialysis unit at Wrexham Maelor hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Agreement in principle to fund a subsidiary renal unit at Wrexham Maelor hospital was announced on 21 May and Clwyd health authority has been invited to submit appropriate proposals to the Welsh Office.

Operating Theatre Closures

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the number of operating theatres closed in 1989.

Mr. David Hunt: Figures on numbers of operating theatres were first collected as at 31 March 1989. Subsequently, quarterly figures have been collected. Provisional figures show a net gain of two operating theatres during the period from 1 April to 31 December 1989.

Hospital Closures

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give the number of hospitals closed *(a)* wholly and *(b)* partly during 1989.

Mr. David Hunt: There were no closures of hospitals in 1989. 13 permanent partial closures were implemented in the year on service rationalisation and policy grounds.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will identify the location and status of waste disposal sites in Wales by waste disposal authorities, waste type, town, location of facility, name of facility and land size.

Mr. Grist: Information on waste disposal sites is held on the public registers required to be maintained by district councils in Wales, and I would refer the hon. Gentleman to the relevant authority of authorities.

Insulation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of dwellings in each district in Wales are insulated to the standard recommended by his Department.

Mr. Grist: All new houses have to meet the standards of insulation specified in building regulations. No information is available centrally giving the number of houses which meet these standards.

SCOTLAND

National Health Service

16. **Mr. Darling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many health boards in Scotland will remain within budget in the current year.

Mr. Rifkind: All health boards are required to remain within resources made available to them.

17. **Mr. Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to meet the chairman of Lothian health board to discuss the financing of the board.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Yes.

18. **Mr. Jack:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what new investment and improvements his Department has made to health services in Scotland so far this year.

Mr. Forsyth: I do not wish to detain the House with a lengthy list, but improvements include the helicopter ambulance, the commitment of a heart transplant service and a number of new hospital projects including a maternity unit for Moray.

44. **Sir Hector Monro:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what new developments he is proposing for the national health service in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend the Minister responsible for health recently announced six substantial new developments for the national health service in Scotland. First, he has asked Grampian health board to prepare detailed proposals for a new specialist maternity unit in Elgin and for a new cottage hospital in Peterhead. Both units are to be developed on the existing hospital sites. Tayside health board's proposals for a new hospital in Crieff to replace outdated facilities at Crieff cottage

hospital and Bridge of Earn hospital have been approved. Together these three capital projects represent an investment of some £20 million in the NHS estate.

The helicopter ambulance services based on Inverness will be centrally funded to serve the more remote parts of Scotland and allow rapid transfer of patients requiring urgent hospital treatment. This will cost some £600,000.

A new national service for the rehabilitation of brain-injured patients is to be established to complement and enhance the work already being carried out in the NHS and the private sector. It is estimated that there are around 500 patients in Scotland who would likely to benefit from intensive specialised rehabilitation services, many of whom are young people whose quality of life could be vastly enhanced if these facilities were available.

Finally, I am delighted that Scotland is to get its first heart and heart/lung transplant unit so that Scots patients do not have to travel to England for transplant surgery. Many Scots have benefited from the service in England but the long journeys are distressing for very ill patients and their relatives. A new Scottish unit will be much more accessible and will build on the considerable improvements in cardiac surgery in Scotland, which now carry out 2,500 cardiac operations a year.

41. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent discussions he has had with Grampian health board on its 10-year development strategy.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Health Boards are required to submit strategic plans and my officials meet boards regularly to review and monitor progress.

35. **Mr. Ron Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met Lothian health board to discuss its funding problems; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The chief executive of the NHS in Scotland has been in regular contact with the Lothian health board chairman and officials over recent weeks about the board's financial problems.

Newbattle Abbey College

19. **Mr. Eadie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland following receipt of the proposals from the governors of Newbattle Abbey college to the Scottish Education Department meeting the points raised by the Secretary of State when he withdrew grant aid to that college last year, whether he is now in a position to announce his intention to restore grant aid to the college.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has considered the plan submitted to him recently by the governors of Newbattle Abbey college and has concluded that it does not represent a basis for reopening his decision to withdraw direct funding for the college. The trustees and the board of governors have been advised of this decision.

Community Care

20. **Mr. Hood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has met the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to discuss the Government's community care proposals.

Mr. Lang: I have had two wide-ranging and constructive discussions with representatives of the convention's social work committee on this subject—one on 8 September 1989 and the other on 15 May 1990.

Edinburgh Royal Hospital for Sick Children

21. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the waiting time between arrival of emergency cases and examination of those cases at the Edinburgh Royal Hospital for Sick Children.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I understand that Lothian health board is taking action to minimise delays by increasing the number of doctors and changing the doctors' rota system.

Passenger Ferry Services

22. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met both the chairman and the chief executive of Caledonian MacBrayne to discuss passenger ferry services in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend has not met the chairman or chief executive of Caledonian MacBrayne since he took the company into his direct ownership on 2 April. However, my noble Friend the Minister of State and I met the chairman on 19 February shortly after his appointment, and I expect to meet the full board of the company on 25 June. Regular and frequent discussions take place between officials of the Scottish Development Department and Caledonian MacBrayne.

Self-governing Schools

23. **Mr. Graham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many schools in Scotland have formally expressed interest in opting out.

36. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many schools in Scotland have expressed interest in opting out.

Mr. Lang: At one school, Holm primary school in Orkney, parents have presented the school board with a formal request seeking a ballot on self-governing status.

Local Government

24. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to devolve more powers to Scottish local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We propose to delegate to local authorities further powers to issue relaxations of the Building Standards (Scotland) Regulations. This would take effect early next year at the same time as proposed new building standards regulations come into force.

Housing

25. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what initiatives he intends to take with respect to solving Scotland's housing problem.

29. **Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what initiatives he intends to take with respect to solving Scotland's housing problem.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave earlier today to the hon. Members for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) and for Moray (Mrs. Ewing).

Ancillary Staff

26. **Mr. Moonie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has received any representation on the reimbursement of ancillary staff costs via general practitioners in Scotland.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Eight general practitioners in Scotland have made representations.

Incomes

27. **Mr. Stern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland by how much average real incomes in Scotland have risen since 1979.

Mr. Lang: It is estimated that between 1979 and 1989 the average earnings of full-time employees on adult rates in Scotland grew by a quarter (25 per cent.) in real terms.

Steel Industry

28. **Mr. Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to meet trade union representatives from the Scottish steel industry to discuss investment in the Scottish steel industry.

Mr. Lang: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which my right hon. and learned Friend gave today to the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid).

Nuclear Waste

30. **Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about the siting of a nuclear waste repository in the Highlands.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend received a number of representations about the siting of a nuclear waste repository during his consideration of the appeal lodged by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority against Highland regional council's decision to refuse planning permission for the drilling of two test boreholes at Dounreay. However, these representations were not relevant to that appeal, which related only to the application for test drilling. Any proposal for a nuclear waste repository would be the subject of a separate planning application and any objections which it attracted would be considered in that context.

Education Funding

31. **Mr. Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration he has given to removing the funding of education from local authority control.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: None.

COSLA

32. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the president of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to discuss local government.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. and learned Member to the reply which my right hon. and learned Friend gave to the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) on 2 May.

39. **Mr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the president of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to discuss the first year of the administration of the poll tax.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend and I met the president and other senior officers of the convention on 6 April. This was the first of this year's meetings to discuss Government support for local authority current expenditure in 1991-92. There was also some discussion of a progress report prepared by the convention on the first year of the administration of the community charge.

Coronary Care

33. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to secure improved coronary care.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Cardiac surgery funding has been increased; a heart transplant unit is planned; and further educational initiatives will focus on the prevention of coronary heart disease.

Freightliner Working Party

34. **Mr. Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet the Freightliner working party to discuss job prospects for Scotland, including those arising from the Channel tunnel project.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The remit of the Scottish Freight working group, one of a number of advisory groups set up by British Rail to advise it on the preparation of its plans for the provision of freight and passenger services to the Channel tunnel, has now been completed and there are no plans for the group to reconvene. My right hon. and learned Friend is not aware of the existence of a Freightliner working party.

Head Teachers

37. **Mr. Buchan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many head teachers of mixed-sex secondary schools in Scotland are women; what is the total number of head teachers in such schools; and what percentage of that total are women.

Mr. Lang: Of 419 head teachers of public sector mixed-sex secondary schools in Scotland recorded in the school census of September 1988, 15 (4 per cent.) were women.

Infertility Clinics

38. **Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average waiting time for a first appointment at an infertility clinic.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information is not collected centrally.

Lowland Scottish Bus Group

40. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State if he will make a statement on the privatisation of the Lowland Scottish bus group.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. and learned Friend announced on 1 June 1990 that he has given his consent to the sale by the Scottish Transport Group of Lowland Scottish Omnibuses Ltd. to the company's management-employee buy-out team.

Scottish Assembly

42. **Mr. Gow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received about the setting up of an assembly in Edinburgh.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Five letters in the past six months.

Training

43. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will detail the information on training matters, hitherto available through Parliamentary questions, which will be restricted under the heading of commercial confidential following the establishment of Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

Mr. Lang: To the extent that information on training matters is regarded as commercial in confidence at present, it is likely to be so regarded in future; and conversely where such information is not presently regarded as commercial in confidence, it is not likely to be so regarded in future.

Flooding, Tayside

45. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the aid which his Department has given to flood victims in Tayside; and what assistance his Department has received from the Tayside regional council and the Tay purification board.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No claims have yet been received from farmers in Tayside in respect of the special assistance for the repair of elevated floodbanks. Similarly, claims from local authorities from assistance under the Bellwin arrangements are still awaited.

The Scottish Office received valuable assistance from the Tay river purification board in the form of situation reports and detailed information on river levels and flows. The board also concluded that a flood warning system for the River Tay should be completed as soon as practicable. The Scottish Office endorsed this proposal by adjusting the board's borrowing consent to permit the necessary expenditure to be incurred this year.

Tayside regional council acted as co-ordinators for the emergency services during the flood. Council staff operated the emergency control centre and teams of workmen and equipment were supplied to meet problems as they arose. In addition, situation reports were provided to the Scottish Office.

In response to a suggestion by my noble Friend the Minister of State, the regional council has taken the lead in co-ordinating the various interests concerned with river corridor management in the Tay area. The council has identified a need for an independent survey by expert hydrologists and has already interviewed consultants in this field about the terms of a possible brief for such a study. A meeting of interested parties is currently being arranged and will be held shortly.

For our part, the Government have agreed to contribute up to £10,000 towards the costs of the study and Scottish Office officials will continue to co-operate in these initiatives.

Barrhead

46. **Mr. Allan Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with the Scottish Development Agency about the regeneration of Barrhead.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. and learned Friend has had no recent discussions with the SDA about the regeneration of Barrhead. However, following the meeting I had with my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), the agency is participating in the Barrhead regeneration study. A meeting to discuss the results of that study is planned for the middle of this month.

The agency continues to be involved in plans to develop the vacant land on the Armitage Shanks site. It has also provided advice to the management on its recent buy-out of the stainless steel operation at Barrhead.

A92-94

47. **Mr. Buchanan-Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects the dualling of the A92-94 road Perth to Aberdeen to be completed and in operation: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: During the past decade the Government have given high priority to the upgrading of the Perth to Aberdeen route to dual carriageway. During this period, 12 schemes have been completed on the route at a total cost of £75 million. Three further schemes valued in total at nearly £20 million are currently under construction and are all programmed to be completed during this financial year. The penultimate improvement on this route is the £10 million Tarbrax to Forfar scheme, which is due to start construction later this year, leaving the Brechin bypass as the final improvement scheme to be undertaken. The necessary preparatory work and statutory procedures for this scheme are expected to be completed later this year and it will then be considered for a start date in light of its relative priority and available resources.

Low flying

48. **Sir David Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he proposes to take in the light of the recommendations of the Defence Select Committee's recent report into low flying by the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Neubert: I have been asked to reply. The Government are considering very carefully the report on low flying by the House of Commons Defence Committee and will respond to all its recommendations in their reply to the Committee.

Bankruptcy

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each year since inception of the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985 the names of the 10 trustees who were most frequently appointed in sequestrations, and for each year the number of cases in which each was appointed.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the table:

Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985
Appointments held by Individual Trustees 1986-1990

Year and Permanent Trustee	*Number of Cases*
1986	
P. Armour, Deloitte Haskins & Sells, Edinbugh	25
D. Jackson, Douglas Laing & Jackson, Glasgow	22
R. S. MacGregor, Pannell Kerr Forster, Edinburgh	18
P. C. Taylor, Deloitte Haskins & Sells, Edinburgh	17
O. Balfour, Deloitte Haskins & Sells, Aberdeen	17
R. Blin, Pannel Kerr Forster, Glasgow	16
F. Blin, Cork Gully, Glasgow	14
A. Thomson, A. C. Thomson & Co, Dunfermline	12
R. B. Graham, Cork Gully, Edinburgh	11
G. I. Rankin, Deloitte Haskins & Sells, Glasgow	11
1987	
O. Balfour, Deloitte Haskins & Sells, Aberdeen	65
R. S. MacGregor, Pannel Kerr Forster, Edinburgh	43
P. C. Taylor, Deloitte Haskins & Sells, Edinburgh	42
F. Blin, Cork Gully, Glasgow	38
R. B. Graham, Cork Gully, Edinburgh	31
J. C. Readman, Arthur Young, Glasgow	30
D. Jackson, Douglas Laing & Jackson, Glasgow	28
K. Ross, Kenneth A Ross & Sharkey, Glasgow	26
G. I. Rankin, Deloitte Haskins & Sells, Glasgow	24
R. L. Forbes, D. M. Campbell & Co, Dumfries	24
1988	
R. S. MacGregor, Pannell Kerr Forster, Edinburgh	206
P. Campbell, Pannell Kerr Forster, Aberdeen	129
B. Jackson, Pannell Kerr Forster, Glasgow	81
J. C. Readman, Arthur Young, Glasgow	50
D. B. Jackson, Douglas Laing & Jackson, Glasgow	33
W. Cleghorn, Deloitte Haskins & Sells, Edinburgh	32
T. Dyer, Scott Oswald & Co, Dundee	30
F. Blin, Cork Gully, Glasgow	29
G. I. Rankin, Deloitte Haskins & Sells, Glasgow	29
P. C. Taylor, Deloitte Haskins & Sells, Edinburgh	27
1989	
R. S. MacGregor, Pannell Kerr Forster, Edinburgh	383
J. C. Readman, Ernst & Young, Glasgow	244
B. Jackson, Pannell Kerr Forster, Glasgow	209
N. Robinson, Kidsons, Glasgow	177
P. Campbell, Pannell Kerr Forster, Aberdeen	162
N. Sharp, Ernst & Young, Dundee	55
N. J. McNeil, BDO Binder Hamlyn, Glasgow	55
C. A. Hastings, C. A. F. Hastings & Co, Glasgow	48
A. O'Boyle, F. L. Walker, Glasgow	44
G. Ritchie, Ernst & Young, Edinburgh	41
1990 To Date	
R. S. MacGregor, Pannell Kerr Forster, Edinburgh	72
J. C. Readman, Ernst & Young, Glasgow	57
N. Robinson, Kidsons Impey, Glasgow	37
P. Campbell, Pannell Kerr Forster, Aberdeen	24
B. Jackson, Pannell Kerr Forster, Glasgow	22
N. J. McNeill, BDO Binder Hamlyn, Glasgow	18
N. Sharp, Ernst & Young, Dundee	13
G. Ritchie, Ernst & Young, Edinburgh	13
A O'Boyle, F. L. Walker & Co, Glasgow	12
J. D. Laurie, Coopers & Lybrand Deloitte, Edinburgh	11

Nursery Education

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of three and four-year-old children were receiving nursery education at local authority maintained nursery schools in each education authority area in Scotland *(a)* during the present academic year and *(b)* in 1979-80.

Mr. Lang: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. and learned Friend to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) on 15 May.

Operating Theatre Closures

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give by health board the number of operating theatres closed in 1989.

Mr. Rifkind: Forth Valley health board closed and relocated five old theatres in 1989. Argyll and Clyde closed one pending refurbishment.

Hospital Closures

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give by health board the number of hospitals closed *(a)* wholly and *(b)* partly during 1989.

Mr. Rifkind: There were no partial closures in 1989 but two hospitals in Lothian health board and two hospitals in Highland health board were wholly closed.

During the same period six major hospital developments were completed, including phase 1 of St. John's hospital, Livingston.

ICI (Explosives Dumping)

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), of 17 May, *Official Report*, column *517*, what steps he is taking to ensure no omission will occur in future publications of reports on disposal of waste at sea.

Mr. Lang: The figures previously given for 1986 and 1987 are being checked against the detailed Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland records of all dumping operations licensed under part II of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985. Figures for 1988 and 1989 are being checked on the same basis. The corrected figures will be published as soon as possible.

Appropriate instructions have now been issued to ensure that any figures given in future are derived directly from the records of licences issued. This should avoid unintended omissions.

Sodium Leak, Dounreay

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what dangers were posed to the work force and local public in Caithness by the sodium leak at Dounreay nuclear power development establishment on 26 April.

Mr. Lang: There was no danger to either the work force or the general public from the incident at Dounreay on 24 April.

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what considerations lay behind the decision not to make public the leak of sodium at Dounreay nuclear power development establishment on 26 April.

Mr. Lang: I understand that the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority included information about the incident which had occurred at Dounreay on the previous day in the site newsletter which was issued on 25 April, copies of which were deposited in the Libraries of both Houses.

Dumping, Firth of Clyde

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what findings have emerged from the survey of the dump site for explosives at Birch Point in the Firth of Clyde; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: A report on the survey, by a DAF research vessel from 14-17 May, and other investigations on the explosives dumped at the Birch Point site is in preparation and will be published as soon as possible. The visual evidence and observations of trawlers in the area confirm that there has been recent and continuing trawling of fishing gear across the dump site. A warning to steer clear of the area, with guidance on what to do if explosives are encountered in fishing nets, was given by notice to fishermen on 8 May and on 18 May. My right hon. and learned Friend will consider what further action may be necessary in the light of the final report.

Local Enterprise Companies

Mr. Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what decisions he has reached about the bids submitted to him from local enterprise companies wishing to run training credits pilot schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I am delighted to announce that, of the three bids submitted to me, two have been approved for further development.

The two successful bids are from Fife Enterprise and Grampian Enterprise, each of which will receive £10,000 to work up detailed bids by 27 July. Both successful bids offered imaginative approaches to mounting training credits pilot schemes in their area, and were able to demonstrate wide-ranging support from both the private and public sectors locally.

I regret that the third bid—from Caithness and Sutherland Enterprise—was not successful. However it too had interesting elements, and I have therefore asked that the Training Agency Highland area office explore with the consortium the extent to which its ideas can be developed within the existing training framework.

That two out of the three bids submitted from Scottish local enterprise companies succeeded on merits (as compared with 15 out of 29 bids submitted from England and Wales) clearly demonstrates the quality of these Scottish bids.

I congratulate the two successful local enterprise companies on their efforts to date, and look forward to receiving their detailed bids in due course.

Redundancies, Glasgow

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many notified redundancies there have been in the former GEAR area/east end of Glasgow in 1987, 1988, 1989 and 1990 to date.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 24 May 1990]:* Information is not available for the whole area specified but the numbers of redundancies, involving 10 or more workers, notified to the Department of Employment in the Parkhead jobcentre area are as follows:

	Numbers
1987	489
1988	1,074
1989	417
[1]1990	146

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Spongiform Encephalopathy (Cats)

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the number of cats awaiting diagnostic tests for spongiform encephalopathy at Bristol university.

Mr. Gummer: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 5 June 1990.

Bees

Mr. Mills: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consultations he has held concerning European and national control of diseases affecting bees.

Mr. Curry: The EC Commission has recently issued proposals for EC controls on bee health to replace national measures after 1992. The Department is in close touch with United Kingdom beekeeping associations and other interested organisations on these proposals. Our aim in the forthcoming negotiations will be to obtain the best safeguards possible to protect United Kingdom bee health.

Rabies

Mr. Mills: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent representations he has received concerning the control of rabies after the completion of the channel tunnel.

Mr. Maclean: This year the Department has received 31 letters concerning rabies controls for the channel tunnel. The inquiries have been assured that planned control measures will ensure that the channel tunnel presents no greater rabies risk than other forms of cross-channel transport.

Topsoil

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many tons of topsoil are being lost per acre due to overcultivation, improper irrigation, ploughed grassland, and deforestation in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Curry: This information is not available.

I am, however, concerned that good agricultural practices are followed to contain soil losses through erosion on susceptible land. There has been considerable research, much of it funded by this Department, and Agricultural Development and Advisory Service staff and their counterparts in Scotland and Northern Ireland are well equipped to provide advice on the means of minimising soil losses.

Pet Food

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to ensure those pet food manufacturers not represented by the Pet Food Manufacturers Association do not include those offals specified in the Bovine Offals Order in their pet food products; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: This is a commercial matter. There is no scientific justification for not using the specified bovine offals in pet food.

Mink Farms

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the disposal of carcases from mink farms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I understand that most are disposed of on licensed toxic waste tips.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will send to Manchester city council and Trafford council the same information given by Her Majesty's Government to Westminister city council in relation to BSE.

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) on 17 May.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has made of the likely total number of cattle which have consumed scrapie-infected feed and which are still alive.

Mr. Maclean: This information is not available.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will update the reply given to the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) on 1 May, *Official Report*, column *465*, concerning the youngest confirmed case found of bovine spongiform encephalopathy in a calf.

Mr. Maclean: The youngest confirmed case remains the 22-month-old cow.

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the number of cattle slaughtered because of bovine spongiform encephalopathy by their specific breeds.

Mr. Maclean: The total number of confirmed cases in each breed up to 23 May is as follows:

Breed	*Number*
Aberdeen Angus	1
Aberdeen Angus ×	17
Aberdeen Angus × Friesian	25
Ayr × Charolais	1
Ayrshire	182
Ayrshire ×	12
Ayrshire × Shorthorn	1
Blonde d'Aquitaine	1
Blue Grey	0
British White × Aberdeen Angus	1
Brown Swiss	4
Charolais	17
Charolais ×	7
Devon	1
Devon × Friesian	3
Friesian	10,747
Friesian × Ayrshire	3
Friesian × Galloway	1
Friesian × Guernsey	1
Friesian × Holstein	455
Friesian × Red Poll	1
Friesian × South Devon	0
Galloway ×	3
Gelbvieh	1
Guernsey	146
Guernsey ×	5
Guernsey × Murray Gray	1
Hereford	39
Hereford ×	110
Hereford × Ayrshire	0
Hereford × Friesian	173
Hereford × Simmental	2
Holstein	262
Jersey	115
Jersey × Charolais	1
Jersey × Friesian	7
Limousin	13
Limousin ×	3
Limousin × Friesian	20
Longhorn	1
Marchigiana	1
Merse Rhine Issel	1
Merse Rhine Issel ×	1
North Devon	0
North Devon × Friesian	2
Red Friesian	12
Red Poll	3
Shorthorn	24
Shorthorn ×	7
Shorthorn × Friesian	1
Shorthorn × Highland	0
Shorthorn × Lincoln Red	0
Shorthorn × Red Friesian	1
Shorthorn × Welsh Black	0
Simmental	18
Simmental × Angus	1
Simmental × Friesian	15
South Devon	7
South Devon × Limousin	0
Sussex	2
Sussex ×	1
Sussex × Friesian	2
Unknown	1,361
Welsh Black	5
Welsh Black × Hereford	1
Total	13,849

Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the names of the members of his Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes; and whether he has required any of them to give an undertaking about secrecy in respect of the Committee's work.

Mr. Maclean: A listing of the current membership of the Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes is set out in the table. Members are requested to observe the confidential nature of the commercial information put before them. However, they are not asked to give a specific undertaking on secrecy.

Membership of the advisory committee on novel foods and processes

Chairman

Professor Derek C. Burke, BSc, PhD, HonLLD. Vice-Chancellor, University of East Anglia.

Members

Professor G. E. Adams, BSc, PhD, DSc. Director of Medical Research Council Radiobiology Unit, Chilton, Didcot, Oxfordshire.

Professor T. Atkinson, BSc, PhD. Deputy Director of the Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research, Microbial Technology Laboratory, Porton Down, Salisbury, Wiltshire.

Dr. A. C. Baird-Parker, OBE, BSc, PhD. Head of the Microbiology Division, Unilever Research.

Professor W. P. T. James, MA, MD, DSc, FRCP, FRCP (Edin), FRSE. Director of the Rowett Research Institute, Aberdeen.

Professor B. E. Moseley, BSc, PhD. Head of Reading Laboratory, Agricultural and Food Research Council, Institute of Food Research, Reading, Berkshire.

Professor D. J. Naismith, BSc, PhD. Head of the Department of Food and Nutritional Sciences, King's College, University of London.

Professor P. Richmond, BSc, PhD, DSc, CPhys FInstP. Head of Norwich Laboratory, Agricultural and Food Research Council, Institute of Food Research, Norwich.

Dr. P. J. Rodgers, MA, DPhil. Research and Regulatory Affairs Manager at ICI Biological Products.

Professor J. E. Smith, DSc, FIBiol, FRSE. Head of the Applied Microbiology Division, Department of Bioscience and Biotechnology, University of Strathclyde.

Dr. J. W. G. Smith, MD, FRCP, FRCPath, FFCM, FIBiol, DipBact. Director of the Public Health Laboratory Service, London.

Professor D. A. T. Southgate, BSc, PhD. Head of the Nutrition Division of Norwich Laboratory, Agricultural and Food Research Council, Institute of Food Research, Norwich.

Dr. A. J. Swallow, PhD, DSc, ScD, CChem, FRSC. Head of the Biophysical Chemistry Department, Paterson Institute for Cancer Research, Christie Hospital and Holt Radium Institute, Manchester.

Professor P. Turner, MD, BSc, FRCP. Professor of Clinical Pharmacology, St. Bartholomew's Hospital Medical College, University of London.

Professor R. Walker, BSc, PhD. Professor of Food Science, University of Surrey.

Bass

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he proposes to proceed with plans to designate nursery areas for the protection of juvenile bass stocks; and if he will make a statment.

Mr. Curry *[pursuant to his reply, of 19 April 1990, c. 980]:* Regulations establishing 34 nursery areas in the coastal waters of England and Wales and prohibiting fishing for bass from vessels for all parts of the year were laid before Parliament today. The Bass (Specified Sea Areas) (Prohibition of Fishing) Order 1990, SI 1990 No. 1156, will take effect from 27 June this year.

The nursery areas are those announced on 19 April with one modification so as to exclude a portion of the eastern areas of Poole harbour. The regulations complete the package of measures that the Fisheries Departments are adopting for the long-term conservation and management of the bass fishery. The other parts of the package, an increase in the minimum landing size from 32 to 36 cm and the introduction of mesh size controls for gill and similar nets, came into operation in January.

An advisory leaflet, "Bass: Nursery Areas and Other Conservation Measures", will be issued by the Department and the Welsh Office within the next fortnight. Copies will be sent to fishermen's organisations, sea anglers' associations, sea fisheries committees and the National Rivers Authority and will also be available on request from this Department and the Welsh Office.

EMPLOYMENT

Low Pay

49. **Mr. Allen Adams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any proposals to improve the financial circumstances of low-paid workers.

Mr. Nicholls: The best way to help the lower paid is through continuing economic and employment growth and greater prosperity for all.

Mines

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many *(a)* fatal accidents and *(b)* major accidents there were in (i) British Coal deep mines, (ii) licensed private deep coal mines, (iii) British Coal opencast mines and (iv) licensed private opencast coal mines in (1) England, (2) Scotland and (3) Wales in each of the last five years;

(2) what was the number of *(a)* fatal injuries and *(b)* major injuries in (i) British Coal deep mines, (ii) licensed private deep coal mines, (iii) British Coal opencast mines and (iv) licensed private opencast mines in (1) England, (2) Scotland and (3) Wales in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Nicholls: It is not possible to determine the number of accidents that resulted in *(a)* fatal injuries or *(b)* major injuries without incurring disproportionate cost.

The numbers of fatal injuries at the premises listed are:

	England			*Scotland*			*Wales*	
	British Coal deep mines	*Licensed coal mines*	*Opencast coal quarries*	*British Coal deep mines*	*Licensed coal mines*	*Opencast coal quarries*	*British Coal deep mines*	*Licensed coal mines*	*Opencast coal mines*
[1]1984-85	17	—	—	1	—	1	2	2	—
1985-86	22	—	2	3	—	—	3	1	—
1986-87	11	1	—	1	2	—	3	—	1
1987-88	8	2	—	1	—	1	—	1	1
1988-89	14	1	—	—	1	1	4	—	—

[1]Covering a 15 month period January 1984 to March 1985.

It is not possible to separate major injuries for England, Scotland and Wales without incurring disproportionate cost. National figures are as follows:

	British Coal deep mines	*Licensed coal mines*	*Opencast coal quarries*
[1]1984-85	365	13	19
1985-86	715	17	29
[2]1986-87	952	30	49
1987-88	729	27	48
1988-89	685	25	45

[1]Covering a 15 month period January 1984 to March 1985.

[2]The introduction of the RIDDOR Regulations on 1 April 1986 widened the coverage of the "serious" injury category. Major injury figures from 1986-87 are therefore not directly comparable with those from earlier years.

Adjudication Officers

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the number of unemployed claimants in Great Britain, each region, London and each

London employment service area who have been referred to an adjudication officer on grounds of voluntary unemployment, for each month since 9 October 1989, categorised according to each reason for disqualification; and how many in each case have (i) been disqualified; (ii) not been disqualified and (iii) are awaiting adjudication.

Mr. Eggar: The employment service, which is responsible for the administration of unemployment benefit, became an executive agency on 2 April 1990. Mr. Mike Fogden, the employment service's chief executive, will be replying in writing to the hon. Member.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will update the information on decisions by adjudication officers he gave in the *Official Report*, 25 October 1989, columns *501-2*, for each month since 9 October 1989, and including information on the number of referrals to adjudication officers;

(2) what information he has on the average time between the submission of cases to adjudication officers on (i) actively seeking work, (ii) refusal of employment and (iii) availability, and on adjudication decision, in London and its employment service areas, and throughout Great Britain; and if he will make a statement on adjudication officer staffing levels.

Mr. Eggar: The employment service, which is responsible for providing statistical information on claims for unemployment benefit, became an executive agency on 2 April 1990. Mr. Mike Fogden, the employment service's executive, will be replying in writing to the hon. Member.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list his Department's area adjudication sections in London and the number and physical location of adjudication officers; and if he will make a statement on their relocation, indicating where they will be located in the future and the methods that will be used to ensure that adjudication officers have the necessary local labour market knowledge required to adjudicate on questions of availability and actively seeking work.

Mr. Eggar: The employment service, which is responsible for the location of adjudication officers, became an executive agency on 2 April 1990. Mr. Mike Fogden, the employment service's chief executive, will be replying in writing to the hon. Member.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has on the percentage of (i) refusal of employment, (ii) actively seeking work, (iii) availability and (iv) restricted availability questions decided within four weeks of referral to an adjudication officer for each employment service area, for the last four quarters.

Mr. Eggar: The employment service, which is responsible for collating statistics on claims for unemployment benefit, became an executive agency on 2 April 1990. Mr. Mike Fogden, the employment service's chief executive, will be replying in writing to the hon. Member.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the information collected on the 5 per cent. sample of adjudication officers' cases referred to in his answer of 8 January, *Official Report*, column *490*, with regard to the average time between receipt of a referral and an adjudication decision on *(a)* refusal of employment and *(b)* actively seeking work.

Mr. Eggar: The employment service, which is responsible for collecting statistics on claims for unemployment benefit, became an executive agency on 2 April 1990. Mr. Mike Fogden, the employment service's chief executive, will be replying in writing to the hon. Member.

Employment Service Office Managers

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the names, addresses and telephone numbers of each employment service area office manager.

Mr. Eggar: The employment service, which is responsible for the network of local and area offices, became an executive agency on 2 April 1990. Mr. Mike Fogden, the employment service's chief executive, will be replying in writing to the hon. Member.

Restart

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many restart interviews were conducted, and how many people were *(a)* referred to each menu option at the restart interview, *(b)* what numbers actually took up their referral, *(c)* what numbers were referred to the unemployment benefit service for (i) failure to attend the restart interview, (ii) refusal of employment, (iii) actively seeking work, (iv) non-availability and (v) restricted availability, for the quarters ended September 1989, December 1989, and March 1990; and in each case what number had their benefit suspended or withdrawn; and if he is able to give a regional breakdown of the figures.

Mr. Eggar: The employment service, which is responsible for the restart programme, became an executive agency on 2 April 1990. Mr. Mike Fogden, the employment service's chief executive, will be replying in writing to the hon. Member.

Mines and Quarries Inspectors

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many inspectors from Her Majesty's mines and quarries inspectorate were based in *(a)* England, *(b)* Scotland and *(c)* Wales in each of the last five years.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is shown in the table. Figures relate to the locations of district or area offices; some mines inspectorate district offices cover areas which extend over territorial boundaries and mines and quarries inspectors may work in more than one district or area.

Number of inspectors in HSE's Mines and Quarries Inspectorates[1] *based in:*

	England[2]	*Scotland*	*Wales*	*Total*
(1 April)				
1985	70	9	13	92
1986	65	7	10	82
1987	66	7	11	84
1988	56	5	11	72

	England[2]	Scotland	Wales	Total
1989	51	6	10	67
1990	47	[3]2	9	58

[1] On 1 October 1989, the quarries inspectorate transferred to HSE's factory and agricultural inspectorate division.
[2] The totals for England include inspectors based in the inspectorates' headquarters.
[3] The mines inspectorate's Scottish and north eastern district office moved from Edinburgh to Gosforth in September 1989.

Toxic Chemicals

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the work of the working group on the assessment of toxic chemicals, in so far as it affects the health and safety of industrial work forces.

Mr. Nicholls: The working group on the assessment of toxic chemicals undetakes scientific assessments of the toxicological, epidemiological, and other data relating to hazardous substances to which persons may be exposed in workplaces. It makes recommendations to the Advisory Committee on Toxic Substances, which advises the Health and Safety Commission, on the assignment of occupational exposure limits for such substances. These limits are for use in determining the adequacy of the control of exposure under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988.

Advisory Committee on Dangerous Substances

Mr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to expand his Advisory Committee on Dangerous Substances by inviting professional environmentalists to become members.

Mr. Nicholls: No. This is an advisory committee of the Health and Safety Commission and its terms of reference and membership are matters for the commission to consider.

Labour and Social Affairs Council

Mr. Stevens: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Labour and Social Affairs Council meeting held in Brussels on Tuesday 29 May.

Mr. Howard: The meeting was very constructive. The main business was the adoption of a resolution put forward by the Irish Presidency on action to assist the long-term unemployed.

The council also adopted a resolution on the fight against racism and xenophobia; and a proposal for an action programme on continuing training. I expressed my support for the objectives of this decision; but made clear our objections to the inclusion of the social charter in the recital.

There was a discussion of how we should amend existing regulations governing the freedom of movement for workers within the Community; and of a proposal for a new regulation on eligibility of migrant workers and their families to non-contributory benefits. It was agreed both issues needed further consideration.

The council also adopted a resolution on the protection of the dignity of women and men at work, which is concerned with protection against sexual harassment; the third joint programme to encourage the exchange of young workers within the Community; and two directives on minimum health and safety requirements for workers in these areas: handling heavy loads where there is a risk of back injury for workers; and for work with display screen equipment. A common position was reached on a third directive on the protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to biological agents at work.

In informal discussion, we considered how we might support the efforts of Poland and Hungary to move to a free market economy. Their Ministers for Employment had addressed Community Employment Ministers at an informal meeting on 28 May.

Finally, Commisssioner Papandreou gave a first informal report on member states' implementation of measures already agreed in the social area. This was in response to my request for regular reports on implementation; and I have asked her to let member states have her report in writing.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 7 June 1990

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Higher Education

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has on the numbers of people who applied for higher education, by higher educational establishment, for each of the last five years.

Mr. Jackson: Complete information on the numbers of candidates applying for entry to individual institutions, each of which will typically make applications to several institutions, is not held centrally.

Many candidates applying for admission to an higher education course through the Universities Central Council on Admissions (UCCA) and the Polytechnics Central Admissions System (PCAS) make use of both schemes, and the candidates are included in both instances in the table as appropriate. Just over 92,000 candidates for entry in 1989 were common to both schemes.

Information on the numbers of people applying for higher education through the two central admission agencies is as follows:

UCCA Applicants[1]			*Year of entry*		
	1985	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*
Home domicile	157,085	152,588	152,520	156,981	171,802
Overseas domicile	19,468	21,191	23,726	26,633	24,285
Total	176,553	173,779	176,246	183,614	196,087

PCAS applicants[2]			*Year of entry*		
	1985	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*[3]	*1989*[4]
Home domicile		130,230	130,329	134,811	159,522
Overseas domicile	n/a	8,647	9,578	11,329	10,157
Total	—	138,877	139,907	146,140	169,679

Sources
UCCA—UCCA Annual Reports.
PCAS—1986-88: PCAS Annual Reports.
1989: Statistical Supplement to 1988-89 Report.

[1] Candidates applying for admission to UK universities (excluding the Open University and the University of Buckingham) through UCCA for full-time undergraduate first degree or first diploma courses.
[2] The PCAS admissions scheme started with entry for 1986 and covered 30 polytechnics in England and Wales offering full-time and sandwich first degree and Dip. HE courses.
[3] For 1988 entry, institutional coverage extended to include eight of the larger colleges of higher education in England.
[4] For 1989 entry, the scheme was extended to cover entry to full-time HND courses.

Undergraduate Courses

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the latest figures for applications to undergraduate courses beginning in September 1990 and September 1991.

Mr. Jackson: By 31 March 1990, there had been 851,693 applications through the Universities Central Council on Admissions (UCCA) from UK domiciled students for admission to UK universities at undergraduate level and 603,105 applications through the Polytechnics Central Admissions System (PCAS) for admission to undergraduate courses including HNDs at polytechnics and colleges in England and Wales. Information on applications deferred to 1991 is not yet available.
Sources: UCCA and PCAS

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Nazi Regalia

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Attorney-General what consideration he is giving to granting consent for proceedings under part III of the Public Order Act 1986 against the owners of Cutdown, formerly of 40 Ridinghouse street, London W1 in connection with the alleged sale of Nazi regalia.

The Attorney-General: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman very shortly.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

IGM Polsotersystene AG

Mr Allan Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received concerning the operations in the United Kindgdom of IGM Polsotersystene AG; and what action he intends to take.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None. I shall be replying soon to the hon. Member's letter of 24 May about a non-UK company, which may be the company he has in mind.

Cable Television

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what arrangements he proposes to make for licensing under the Telecommunications Act 1984 existing cable television relay systems which do not at

present require to be licensed under the Cable and Broadcasting Act 1984, should the proposals in the Broadcasting Bill receive parliamentary approval.

Mr. Forth: Relay systems of any size carrying only the four terrestrial TV channels will be covered by a class licence under the Telecommunications Act. Other relay systems, not requiring a licence under the Cable and Broadcasting Act at the date the new proposals come into force and not at that date carrying all four terrestrial TV channels and all five DBS channels will be allowed to continue to carry those channels that they carried on that date also under the terms of a class licence. Any subsequent upgrading will be treated for licensing purposes as a new system and the right of first refusal for existing broadband cable licensees or local delivery operators will apply where appropriate.

Relay systems of any size which carry all four terrestrial TV channels and all five DBS channels on the date that the new proposals come into force will thereafter be authorised to carry any TV or radio services other than those proscribed under provisions contained in clause 165 of the Broadcasting Bill. Those restricted to a single building or to adjacent dwelling houses will be covered by another class licence. Larger systems will, however, require an individual Telecommunications Act licence for which they will need to apply in advance of the new regime.

Such licences granted in respect of systems covering fewer than 1,000 homes will be on the same terms as those for new systems of the same size. Unlike licences for new systems, the award of these licences will not be subject to the right of first refusal procedure. Multiple licence applications will not, however, be accepted in respect of systems that had previously been connected to form a larger system of over 1,000 homes. Further details about the licensing arrangements will be given later this year.

Systems of the type described in the previous paragraph, covering 1,000 homes or more and lying within a cable franchise area will, under the terms of the Bill, be deemed to have a Cable and Broadcasting Act diffusion service licence with an initial life of five years. Each such system will also receive a concurrent Telecommunications Act licence.

Systems covering 1,000 homes or more and lying outside any cable franchise area will, under the provisions of the Bill, be deemed to have a local delivery licence, with an initial term of five years. These will also receive individual Telecommunications Act licences, similar to those in the previous category and, in particular, not granting the licensee powers under the telecommunications code.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what arrangements he proposes to make for licensing cable television systems covering fewer than 1,000 homes under the Telecommunications Act 1984.

Mr. Forth: My hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Home Office confirmed on 2 March 1990 at column *351* that subject to parliamentary approval of our proposals, cable TV systems covering fewer than 1,000 homes will not require to be licensed by the Independent Television Commission. All such cable systems will, however, continue to require licensing under section 7 of the Telecommunications Act 1984.

Systems restricted to single buildings or to two adjacent dwelling houses will be covered by a class licence which will authorise them to carry any TV or radio service not specifically proscribed under provisions contained in clause 165 of the Broadcasting Bill. We would be prepared to consider extending this class licence to cover groups of up to, say, five terraced houses if there proved to be a significant demand for such systems from groups of neighbours. Individual licences will be granted in respect of other systems passing fewer than 1,000 homes subject, in areas where a licence has been granted to a broadband cable or local delivery operator, to the right of first refusal being given to that licence holder. These individual licences will contain similar authorisations to those in the class licence and run for 10 years. They will be renewable.

The first refusal procedure will operate only if the system lies wholly or partly within a cable franchise area licensed under the Cable and Broadcasting Act by the Cable Authority before its abolition, or within that part of a local delivery operator's area for which the operator has undertaken to provide a service. The cable or local delivery operator will be given the right to provide an alternative service to that proposed unless he is in default of his build timetable or has failed to honour a previous commitment to provide an alternative service elsewhere in the cable/LDO area. Any operator that qualifies for this right will be given 20 working days in which to offer to provide an alternative service. We would expect the service to be fully operational within four months from the date my Department offers the operator first refusal. The service must provide a similar or superior service to that proposed by the SMATV applicant, at a reasonable price, and, in particular, include at least the same major satellite and terrestrial channels and a similar range of alternative channels. In the case of cable franchise areas, the alternative system should be capable of being upgraded to a broadband service without further internal rewiring.

If the cable operator/LDO waives the right of first refusal or fails to honour his commitment to provide an alternative service, the SMATV operator will be granted an individual Telecommunications Act licence of 10 years' duration and renewable. The licence, would, however, be liable to revocation if the promised service was not provided within four months of the licence being issued.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prison Population

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department to what extent it is estimated by his research unit that demographic trends reduced the number of people entering Her Majesty's prisons in the last five years; and what is the projection for the next five years.

Mr. Mellor: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what legal representation is available to those who seek asylum in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: It is open to asylum seekers in the United Kingdom to approach solicitors, law centres or other organisations who may make representations on

their behalf. Asylum seekers are eligible to apply for legal aid. Representations from any source are considered carefully before a final decision is taken. When we are minded to refuse an applicant who is not legally represented and who does not have a right of appeal exercisable in this country, the case will normally be referred to the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service which will consider making representations.

White Lion Public House, London

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis into the cost, during the past four months, of police time and resources devoted to visits to the White Lion public house, in Central street, London EC1.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Metropolitan police officers have visited the White Lion public house in Central street, London EC1 on a number of occasions over the last four months as part of ordinary police duties. Information is not available to enable the costs of these visits to be calculated.

Drugs

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what stage of development the demand reduction task force, the setting up of which was announced by the Prime Minister at the world ministerial drugs summit in April, has reached.

Mr. Mellor: An interdepartmental steering group is actively considering how to take forward this initiative and other actions following on from the summit. We hope shortly to announce how the task force will be organised and will approach its important work. In the meantime, my right hon. and learned Friend is discussing with the Secretary of State for Health where the co-ordinating group for the task force might best be located.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much money has been set aside to help with the setting up of the demand reduction task force.

Mr. Mellor: Subject to parliamentary approval, the funding of the task force will be £257,000 in the current financial year and £500,000 in subsequent years.

Correspondence

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the hon. Member for Walsall, North will be receiving a reply to the letter he wrote on 22 March regarding the television concessionary licence and Walsall council.

Mr. Mellor: I replied on 5 June.

ENERGY

British Coal

Mr. Arbuthnot: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether the future external financing requirements of British Coal have yet been determined, as indicated in paragraph 93 of Cm. 1005.

Mr. Baldry: British Coal has reviewed its external financing requirement (EFR) for 1990-91 in the light of the final outcome of its negotiations with the electricity supply industry, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has agreed to its proposal that its external financing limit (EFL) for 1990-91 should be set at £905 million. This is consistent with British Coal achieving profitability this year. Within this figure my right hon. Friend has also agreed that the corporation's capital allocation for 1990-91 should be £445 million. This compares with the provisional EFL and capital allocation figures of £385 million and £490 million respectively shown in Cm. 1005. This increase in the EFL will be charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure. A supplementary estimate for restructuring grant, deficiency grant, and loans on vote in order to finance this increased EFR will be presented shortly. The EFRs and capital allocations for later years remain under review.

Electricity Supply

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether suppliers of renewable energy in Scotland who have a contracted use of the interconnector can sell electricity to England and Wales as part of the non-fossil fuel obligation.

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to my answer to his earlier question on 8 February 1990, *Official Report*, column *724*.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy what steps he is taking to ensure that contracts to supply electricity under the non-fossil fuel obligation are of sufficient duration to secure the viability of capital-intensive wind energy projects.

Mr. Baldry: The terms of the contracts concluded in order to meet the requirements of the non-fossil fuel obligation are a matter primarily for the public electricity suppliers concerned. I am satisfied that sufficient flexibility exists under the NFFO arrangements to secure an adequate number of viable projects. In addition my right hon. Friend proposes to set a tranche of the NFFO next year specifically for wind projects.

Wave Power

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy whether disciplinary action is to be taken against any Atomic Energy Authority staff or civil servants who produced misleading comparisons of the cost of wave power; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Peter Morrison: The question of disciplinary action does not arise, since no misleading comparisons have been made. A series of research reports has been published in recent years each contributing to the understanding of wave power. There is considerable uncertainty about the costs of wave power and this is reflected in the range of assumptions incorporated in the reports.

Leukaemia

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what studies have been undertaken of the incidence of leukaemia in the children of people working for the Atomic Energy Authority;

(2) what studies have been made of the incidence of leukaemia in the children of people working in nuclear power stations.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I am advised that no studies have yet been undertaken specifically to examine the incidence of leukaemia in the offspring of people working at nuclear power stations in the United Kingdom or at Atomic Energy Authority sites. However, in February of this year, a report from the Medical Research Fund epidemiology unit at Southampton (Professor Gardner et al) was published in the *British Medical Journal*. This study documented a statistical association of leukaemia and non-Hodgkins lymphoma in children living near the Sellafield reprocessing plant and the employment of their fathers at the plant.

In view of the importance of this complex matter, the Government referred Professor Gardner's study to the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment (COMARE) for its urgent consideration and preliminary advice. On 2 April my hon. Friend, the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, announced to Parliament that the Government had received COMARE's preliminary advice and accepted all its recommendations. The relevant Government Department's bodies have set up arrangements to enable them to take this work forward as speedily as possible.

In its advice, COMARE recommended that high priority be given to a study which it had recommended at an earlier stage to consider any possible health effects on the offspring of parents occupationally exposed to radiation. I understand that the UKAEA and Nuclear Electric are fully committed to assisting with any independent studies recommended by COMARE and accepted by Government.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Angola

Mr. Moss: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how he will respond to the appeal by the United Nations Secretary-General for emergency assistance to Angola.

Mrs. Chalker: We are making available £500,000 for emergency supplies to help alleviate the consequences of drought in southern Angola. We are already discussing with British and international relief agencies the most effective uses to which our assistance can be put.

Uganda

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will provide a breakdown of (1) emergency aid, (2) project aid and (3) programme aid to Uganda for each of the last five years, giving details of the regional distribution and sectors supported.

Mrs. Chalker: Gross British bilateral aid to Uganda over the five-year period 1985-1989 was as follows:

£ million

	1985	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*
Emergency Aid	0.244	1.056	0.070	0.436	1.541
Project Aid	3.298	2.713	5.604	3.651	5.421
Programme Aid	0.206	0.005	0.016	17.126	12.626
Technical Assistance	2.867	2.784	3.510	6.392	6.766
Other	2.556	2.018	2.979	1.374	2.046
Total	9.171	8.576	12.179	28.979	28.400

The project aid figures include funds invested through the Commonwealth Development Corporation. The 1989 figures are provisional at this stage.

The majority of the emergency aid has gone to the northern and eastern parts of Uganda. Project aid has largely been disbursed in the Kampala, Entebbe, and Jinja region on the rehabilitation of Owen Falls power station, certain key roads and Mulago hospital, and on support to the police force. Programme aid has been allocated mostly to transport, industry and agriculture; no data are readily available on its distribution by region.

Global Warming

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what he estimates to be the third-world population at risk from a loss of agricultural income if global temperatures rise by *(a)* 0·5 deg, *(b)* 1 deg, *(c)* 1·5 deg, and *(d)* 2 deg, by 2030;

(2) what studies or research his Department has commissioned on the effect of global warming and sea level rise on developing countries;

(3) what estimates are available of the area of land in developing countries that would be flooded by a sea level rise of *(a)* 20 cm, *(b)* 50 cm, *(c)* 70 cm, and *(d)* 1 m;

(4) what estimates he has of the number of people who would be forced to relocate by a 1 m rise in the sea level in *(a)* Bangladesh, *(b)* Egypt and *(c)* the Maldives;

(5) what estimates are available of the number of people in developing countries who currently live on land that would be flooded if the sea level rose by *(a)* 20 cm, *(b)* 50 cm, *(c)* 70 cm and *(d)* 1 m; and if he will estimate at expected population growth rates what these populations are likely to be in 2030;

(6) what is the estimated global cost of building sea defences in developing countries to protect land against a sea level rise of *(a)* 20 cm, *(b)* 50 cm, *(c)* 70 cm, and *(d)* 1 m;

(7) what estimates are available of the effect of *(a)* a 1 deg and *(b)* a 2 deg rise in temperature on agricultural output in (i) west Africa, (ii) east Africa, (iii) southern Africa, (iv) south Asia, (v) south-east Asia, (vi) central America and (vii) Latin America.

Mrs. Chalker: The scale and effects of sea level rise and changing agricultural productivity arising from global warming on people in developing countries remain uncertain. The most detailed study is that carried out by the intergovernmental panel on climate change (IPCC), now nearing completion. Copies of the IPCC's report will

be placed in the Library of both Houses when it is published. Last year the ODA commissioned a study on options for limiting CO_2 emissions in developing countries. I will place a copy of the report in the Library of both Houses.

Tobacco

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what assessment has been made of the results of the World Health Organisation's tobacco and health programme aimed at helping countries elaborate on their tobacco control policies;

(2) whether his Department has been approached by any developing countries asking for advice about *(a)* anti-smoking education and *(b)* information gained from epidemiology of smoking-related diseases;

(3) what is Britain's contribution to the World Health Organisation tobacco and health programme.

Mrs. Chalker: The World Health Organisation's tobacco or health programme was approved by the World Health Assembly in May 1989 based on a plan of action for 1988-1995. A meeting of the director-general's technical advisory group on tobacco or health was held from 28 to 30 November 1989 to evaluate the first year of practical implementation of the plan of action and to study and advise on issues concerning the various aspects of the programme. This group will continue to review the content, scope and activities of the programme. The United Kingdom supports the World Health Orgnisation's tobacco or health programme through its assessed contribution to the total regular budget of the World Health Organisation. Our budgetary contribution is paid by the Department of Health and totals £9·041 million in the 1990-91 biennium. About 0·18 per cent. (US$1·197 million) of the total WHO regular budget for this biennium is allocated to the tobacco or health programme. The United Kingdom has received no requests from developing countries for assistance with anti-smoking education or the epidemiology of smoking-related diseases under the United Kingdom aid programme.

Kenya National Parks

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made with the request from the Government of Kenya for equipment to improve the communications system in the Tsavo and Meru national parks.

Mrs. Chalker: The draft project proposal was discussed recently with the Kenya wildlife service. A few details remain to be settled, but we hope to agree the project with it shortly.

PRIME MINISTER

Rain Forests

Q76. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister what assessments she has made of Her Majesty's Government's financial assignment for helping preservation of the rain forests; and what study she has made of proposals to give intellectual property rights to indigenous peoples.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

British aid for tropical forestry is continuously monitored and assessed by the ODA. On intellectual property rights, my hon. and learned Friend the Minister for Industry wrote to the hon. Member on 24 May. ODA officials met Dr. Darrell Posey on 16 May and the issue is under study.

West Yorkshire

Q123. **Mr. Cryer:** To ask the Prime Minister when she next expects to pay an official visit to west Yorkshire.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has at present no plans to do so.

High-tar Tobacco

Mr. Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if she will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the impact on public health in the third world of the expenditure by the European Economic Community on the production and dumping of high-tar tobacco; and if she will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

The Government are concerned at the grave consequences on health of smoking cigarettes and other forms of tobacco both in Europe and in the third world. We have long been critical of the Community's CAP tobacco regime. We have consistently argued that support for this crop should be reduced. We were successful in securing the introduction in 1988, of measures to reduce expenditure and discourage the production of the less-marketable and higher-tar varieties, for example through the stabiliser mechanism. Further reductions in support for certain of the less-marketable varieties were agreed in this year's price-fixing negotiations. Our objective is less production, reduced intervention and less subsidised export, of the higher-tar varieties. We shall take every opportunity to continue to pursue this policy in future negotiations.

Air Ambulances

Mr. Harris: To ask the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on co-ordination between the Department of Health and the Scottish Office on the provision of air ambulances.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

It is for health authorities in England and the Common Services Agency, of which the Scottish ambulance service is a division, in Scotland, to decide the level, nature and extent of patient transport services required taking into account their resources and the competing demands upon them.

Engagements

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 June.

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 June.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 June.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 June.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 7 June.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has given an address at the luncheon of the North Atlantic Council at Turnberry. Later today she will begin a visit to the Soviet Union.

Brymbo Steelworks

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Prime Minister if she will visit Brymbo steelworks to meet steelworkers.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Panama

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his reply of 22 February, *Official Report*, column *871*, what is the latest information he has on the number of Panamanian civilians killed as a result of the invasion of Panama by the United States of America.

Mr. Sainsbury: We have no independent source for such figures. We understand that information from the Panamanian Institute of Legal Medicine suggests a figure of 202. Other estimates range between 200 and 300.

Eastern Europe

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, further to his answer of 2 May, *Official Report*, column *568*, if he has any proposals to provide further reinforcement for the United Kingdom diplomatic missions in eastern Europe following democratisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Sixteen new diplomatic service and 28 locally engaged staff posts have already been authorised to reinforce our embassies in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union since October 1989. Further strengthening is currently under consideration.

Nuclear Tests

Mr. Boswell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if British nuclear tests will be affected by the agreement between the United States of America and the Soviet Union of verification protocols to the threshold test ban treaty and the peaceful nuclear explosions treaty and the ratification of those treaties.

Mr. Waldegrave: For many years the policy of the United Kingdom has been to test nuclear devices within the 150 kiloton yield limit imposed by the US-Soviet threshold test ban treaty. Because our nuclear tests are conducted at the Nevada test site we have agreed that the verification measures, which will allow each party to monitor the yield of certain tests conducted by the other, can be extended to British tests. We are satisfied that these arrangements will not significantly affect British tests and that there are no security implications.

EC Council of Ministers

Mr. Stevens: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a statement of forthcoming business in the European Community Council of Ministers.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Environment Council will meet on 7 and 8 June. The Presidency hopes for agreement on the amended waste framework proposal to amend directive 75/442 which establishes the basic structure for waste management in the Community; on the proposal on the labelling, use, content and disposal of batteries and accumulators containing dangerous substances, and on a resolution to establish policy targets on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. The Council will also seek to conclude a Community negotiating position for the London ozone layer conference in June. There will be a discussion and possible agreement of the proposal to add four substances to annex II to the directive concerning the discharge of dangerous substances to water, and the Presidency hopes for agreement on the proposal to establish a committee to facilitate amendment of existing directives on drinking water, bathing water and surface water quality. There is likely to be detailed discussion about the protection of waters from pollution by nitrates, and about the proposal to consolidate Community anti-pollution standards for all sizes of motor car. The Presidency will report progress on the proposal concerning the protection of habitats and of wild fauna and flora and on the proposal to treat municipal waste water before discharge into the environment.

The Economic and Finance Council will meet on 11 June to discuss multilateral surveillance of member states' economies and the possible development of economic and monetary union beyond stage 1. On 8 May 1990 the Commission published its technical proposals for VAT, mutual assistance and intra-EC trade statistics, based on the agreements reached at ECOFIN at the end of 1989. Initial discussion of these proposals is expected. The Council is expected to discuss the investment services directive, and may also discuss the package of three tax measures to encourage cross-border co-operation between companies (mergers directive, parents/subsidiaries directive and arbitration procedure) and hear a statement by the Taxation Commissioner on the Commission's corporate taxation policy.

The Consumer Council will meet on 13 June. After lengthy and inconclusive discussion on the directive on general product safety at official level, Ministers will be asked to give a clearer direction for future negotiations. They will be particularly concerned with the main areas of contention, notably the scope of the directive, its overlap with other directives and the procedure of handling emergencies at Community level. A draft directive on unfair contract terms is in preparation within the Commission and a progress report is expected. The French have requested a discussion and are expected to press the Commission to step up efforts in this area. The Commission has asked the Dutch Consumer Safety Institute to lead a working party to undertake a review of achievements of the European home and leisure accident surveillance system (EHLASS), and its report is to be tabled at the Council on 13 June. There is likely to be a presentation in the margins by the Commission on a three-year plan for future priorities in consumer policy, which has been agreed and is in the public domain. An

item on the package travel directive has been included at the suggestion of the French. However, the Commission has recently accepted a number of substantive amendments proposed by the European Parliament. No revised text will be available from the Commission in time for the Council discussion, although the Council could still act by unanimity to adopt the common position text agreed at Internal Market Council in February 1990.

At the Foreign Affairs Council on 18 and 19 June, Ministers will discuss preparations for the 25 and 26 June European Council (including political union; economic and monetary union; the free movement of people; and co-operation against drugs and international organised crime). The Commission will present a draft mandate for approval by the Council on the opening of negotiations to create an enhanced free trade area with the EFTA countries, and will present a new strategy for strengthening economic relations with the Mediterranean countries in general. The Council will propose ways of enhancing the EC's co-operation agreement with Yugoslavia and the association agreement with Turkey. There will be an orientation debate on the Communities' relations with central and eastern Europe, and discussions of voting rights in local elections and of the situation in the occupied territories. Ministers will consider the current state of play in the GATT Uruguay round, and preparations for the Houston economic summit on 9 to 11 July. The food aid directive and Community policy on the generalised system of preferences 1991-2000 may also be discussed. Ministers will also discuss political co-operation subjects.

The Transport Council will meet on 18 and 19 June. Ministers will discuss aviation matters which cover the components of the second liberalisation package. It is expected that restrictions on market access and the approval of fares will be further relaxed. Air traffic control discussions should centre on increasing capacity in Europe by integrating air traffic control systems and optimising the traffic route network. On shipping cabotage Ministers hope to establish a basis for a balanced agreement on liberalisation acceptable to all member states. Regarding prevention of accidents causing pollution, we advocate strict compliance with the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea 1972. The Council will support all appropriate measures to improve passenger safety which may be tabled. On road haulage, Ministers will discuss crisis measures to ensure corrective measures will be available to reduce the impact of any possible disruption resulting from increasing liberalisation. It is proposed to fix the Community quota for 1991 and 1992, hopefully increasing the proportion of operations under Community authorisations and ensuring smooth transition to a fully liberalised road haulage market. Discussion on vehicles hired without drivers should ratify abolishing restrictive clauses. The road safety resolution is likely to be discussed, and we strongly support it as drafted because it is in line with United Kingdom views in pressing for early EC agreement on improved construction standards as a means of significantly reducing road haulage casualties. The high-speed network may be discussed under any other business, and we will support the concept of co-ordinating plans, but consider that the case for additional links must be assessed on a commercial basis. Ministers are also likely to discuss fiscal harmonisation of road haulage and infrastructure cost coverage for goods vehicles.

The Internal Market Council will meet on 20 June to discuss a number of measures relevant to the completion of the single market.

The European Council will meet on 25 and 26 June in Dublin. Heads of Government are likely to discuss political union, economic and monetary union, the 1992 programme, the environment, drugs, German unification and the EC's external relations.

The Agriculture Council will meet on 25 and 26 June and is likely to discuss poultry meat marketing standards, non-food uses of agricultural products, foot and mouth disease, the veterinary fund, animal health (horses), trade in live animals, Aujesky's disease, poultry hatching eggs, enzootic bovine leukosis, pesticide residues and pesticide approval. It may also discuss pathogens in feedingstuffs, welfare of calves and pigs, veterinary medicines and organic farming.

The Fisheries Council will meet on 27 June and is likely to discuss technical conservation measures, Mediterranean fisheries, negotiations with third-world countries, seasonal price adjustment for herring, allocation of additional quotas at Greenland, structural measures for small-scale fisheries, submission of data on landing of fishery products, and EC/USSR. It may also discuss revision of 1990 TACs and quotas for 1990.

At the Telecommunications Council on 28 June Ministers will discuss the open network provision (ONP) which sets out to define the terms and conditions under which telecommunications administrations will be required to give access to users in general and private service operators in particular to the telecommunications network infrastructure and certain specific services. The proposed directive on ONP does not itself specify any detailed ONP conditions but sets out a legal framework within which subsequent measures dealing with specific areas are to be drawn up. A common position on the proposal was reached as a result of a political agreement on two market measures to open up the Community telecommunications services markets to competition and the Council may be expected formally to adopt the directive. The Presidency may seek to obtain political agreement on aspects of the mutual recognition of type approval for telecommunications terminal equipment proposal, which aimed at ensuring the mutual recognition of type approval procedures for telecommunications terminal equipment as between different member states and as a necessary step to the creation of a single market in those equipments. Ministers may discuss the integrated services digital network (ISDN), based on the 1989 progress report on the implementation of Council recommendation 86/659/EEC on the co-ordinated introduction of ISDN in the European Community. The progress report presents several proposals for discussion on further activity at the Community level in respect of ISDN. A proposal for a resolution has not yet been received from the Commission. The Council may hold orientation debates on co-operation with eastern European countries in the telecommunications field, and on proposals for a directive and a recommendation aimed at establishing the necessary conditions for the commercial exploitation of digital European cordless telecommunications (DECT) technology throughout the EC. Ministers will also discuss the resolution on frequency management which lays down policy guidelines on management of the radio frequency spectrum aimed at strengthening European co-ordination

of the allocations of radio frequencies, taking full account of the role of the conference of European post and telecommunications administrators in this field.

The Research Council will meet on 29 June. It is expected that common positions will be agreed on the EURET (transport) and EUROTRA II (machine translation) research programmes. The human genome research programme may be adopted. The Research Council will have a preliminary discussion of the Commission's papers on scientific and technological collaboration with third-world countries and eastern Europe and will also discuss a draft Council resolution on the participation of central and eastern European countries in COST (European co-operation in the field of scientific and technical research). The Council may also discuss general issues arising from the proposals for specific programmes of the recently adopted framework programme for R and D, 1990-94.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Benefits in Kind

Ms. Abbott: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by how much the yield of national insurance contributions would be increased if all taxable benefits in kind were treated as earnings.

56. **Mr. Alan Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by how much the yield of national insurance contributions would be increased if all taxable benefits in kind were treated as earnings.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Any increased yield of national insurance contributions would depend on the effects of the employees' upper earnings limit and the various earnings limits for employers" contributions. Because of these factors, the information available about the value of taxable benefits to individual employees compared with their levels of other earnings is insufficiently precise to enable an accurate estimate of additional contributions to be made. However, based on predictions about the total of taxable benefits in kind that are likely to be made available to employees during 1990-91 it is thought that the additional yield could amount to some 1 to 2 per cent. of national insurance contribution income.

Action Credit

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how participation in action credit affects eligibility for housing benefit *(a)* while a claimant is on a part-time placement and receiving the income support disregard and *(b)* when a claimant remains unemployed after the scheme and is receiving accrued wages and income support disregard.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: A person on income support is entitled to maximum housing benefit and maximum community charge benefit. This applies both during participation in action credit and if a person remains on income support after the end of such participation in the scheme.

Benefit Payment

Sir John Farr: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make arrangements for it to be possible for payments made by his Department to be a cheque on the request of the claimant or his accredited representative.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Arrangements exist for benefit payments to be made by girocheque where an immediate payment is necessary or payment is for a short period only. Regular payments of benefit are normally made by order book encashable at a post office.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Adelaide Hospital, Dublin

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will make representations at a meeting of the Anglo-Irish Ministerial Conference to have the present Protestant medical ethics at Adelaide hospital, Dublin, retained in the proposed new hospital to replace it.

Mr. Brooke: I have no present plans to do so, but the right hon. Gentleman knows that his actions will have ensured that the Irish Government will be aware of his concerns.

Running Cost Limits

Mr. Malins: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the 1990-91 running cost limit for the Northern Ireland Office and Northern Ireland Departments.

Mr. Cope: The running cost limit for 1990-91 for the Northern Ireland Office and the Northern Ireland Departments is being set at £592·6 million. Further details of provision for individual Departments are set out in the appropriate estimates volumes.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Finance

57. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the average rates bill as a proportion of earnings for a one-earner family with two children on 75 per cent. average earnings in 1989-90; and what he estimates the proportion of income going on the poll tax will be for the same family in 1990-91.

58. **Mr. Ted Garrett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the average rates bill as a proportion of earnings for a one-earner family with two children on 75 per cent. average earnings in 1989-90; and what he estimates the proportion of income going on the poll tax will be for the same family in 1990-91.

Mr. Chope: I shall write to the hon. Members.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much, in cash and as a percentage of local government income, was met by *(a)* revenue support grant, *(b)* uniform business rate and *(c)* community charge in England in 1990-91.

Mr. Chope: The figures are given in the table.

	£ billion	Per cent.
1989-90		
Rate support grant	9·6	33
Non-domestic rate income[1]	9·5	33
Domestic rate income[2]	9·7	34
1990-91		
Revenue support grant	9·5	29
Non-domestic rate income	10·4	32
Charge income[3]	12·7	39

Notes:

Figures shown for 1989-90 and 1990-91 are not on a comparable basis because of extensive changes to the system of local government finance.

In 1990-91, local authorities also received special transitional grants totalling £187 million.

[1] Net of disabled non-domestic rate relief grant and enterprise zone grant.

[2] Net of domestic rate relief grant, but including domestic rate rebates.

[3] Including community charge benefits and household transitional relief grant.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on how many occasions officials from his Department met officials of Westminster city council in December, January, February and March to discuss matters relating to the community charge.

Mr. Portillo: None.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance was given to local authorities and what allowance was made in standard spending assessments for provision for bad debts and non-payment of the poll tax; and what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on what local authorities should allocate for this provision.

Mr. Chope: It is for each charging authority, in setting the community charge for its area, to make such reasonable provision for non-collection as may be necessary in the light of its individual circumstances. Since there are approximately twice as many charge payers as ratepayers, the absolute number of slow payers can be expected to be greater, but there is no reason why the cash volume of arrears should be greater than under the rating system. Losses through non-payment represent a reduction in revenue rather than an item of expenditure, and are therefore not reflected in standard spending assessments.

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what would be the cost of extending to one year the period during which empty properties are not subject to the standard community charge.

Mr. Chope: The information is not available. But charging authorities already have the discretion to extend the prescribed three-month period for which no standard charge is payable. We are currently collecting information on the use which authorities have made of their discretion and, from the evidence so far, it is clear that a number have decided to extend this period to 12 months.

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to withdraw the discretion given to local councils to fix the level of community charge on property which is not classed as the main or principal residence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: We have made it clear that if local authorities do not make sensitive use of the wide discretion available to them we shall introduce more prescription in time for 1991-92. My right hon. Friend will make a statement on this as soon as we have completed the review of local authority standard charge practices.

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of the cost of granting an automatic 50 per cent. community charge rebate *(a)* to all retirement pensioners and *(b)* to pensioners over the age of 75 years.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 5 June 1990]:* Many pensioners are already entitled to reductions in their community charge through the transitional relief scheme or community charge benefit or both. Many of these already pay less than 50 per cent. of the full charge. The cost of allowing all pensioners who currently pay more than 50 per cent. a reduction to 50 per cent. in 1990-91 is estimated at about £600 million. Of this, about £200 million is for pensioners aged over 75.

Mr. Hawkins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what would be the cost of basing transitional relief for the community charge, for a full financial year, on *(a)* £56 and *(b)* £106, in place of the limit of £156.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 5 June 1990]:* It is estimated that the transitional relief scheme will provide £350 million of relief in 1990-91. This is based on a threshold of £156, equivalent to £3 per week. Reducing the threshold to £2 per week would increase the estimated cost to £570 million; and reducing the threshold to £1 per week would cost £900 million.

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of the cost of granting exemption from the community charge for mothers with a child *(a)* under the age of five years and *(b)* under the age of 10 years.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 5 June 1990]:* Assuming an average personal community charge of £363, it is estimated that exempting mothers with children under five from the community charge would mean a revenue loss of £0·8 billion and exempting mothers with children under 10 years of age would mean a revenue loss of £1·4 billion.

Peat

Sir Gerard Vaughan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will list the action his Department is taking to safeguard the peatlands from commercial devastation.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Government are committed to assessing the practical operation and implementations of the powers contained in the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 and to consider the available options to balance nature conservation against existing mineral extraction interests on key peatland areas. The Government are encouraging research into alternatives for peat and are working with commercial firms in the re-evaluation of alternatives currently available. Whenever appropriate, we are encouraging the use of alternatives.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will review all pre-1948 planning permissions for the extraction of peat which affect sites of special scientific interest; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Government are committed to assessing the practical operation and implementation of the power contained in the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 and are considering the available options to balance nature conservation against existing mineral extraction interests on key peatland sites.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to receive the peatland resource data inventory; how many full-time and part-time staff are involved in carrying out the research at the Nature Conservancy Council; what funds the Government have provided for the research; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave her on 5 June, *Official Report*, column *480*, concerning the peatland resource data inventory.

I am advised by the NCC that it is currently recruiting two full-time staff in addition to the three full-time officers currently employed on the survey. It is for the NCC to decide what portion of its grant in aid of £44·069 million should be devoted to this project.

Ryedale District Council

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will direct the Audit Commission to undertake an extraordinary audit of the accounts of Ryedale district council, north Yorkshire, under section 22(2) of the Local Government and Finance Act 1982 in respect of treatment of receipts from the rent revenue account; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: No. The Secretary of State may direct an extraordinary audit if it appears to him in the public interest to do so. No matters have been brought to his attention which would warrant his making such a direction.

Palace of Westminster (Cleaning)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the panelling and shelving adjacent to the Members' and Strangers' Dining Rooms were last cleaned; who supervised such cleaning; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: The cleaning contract requires panelling and shelving up to a height of 5·5 ft to be dusted daily. Direct responsibility for supervising the work rests with the contractor; the Serjeant at Arms or the Refreshment Department are responsible for checking that the work has been done.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the interior of the Palace of Westminster was last thoroughly cleaned; what inspection was made of that cleaning; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: My Department is responsible for cleaning only parts of the Palace—generally public areas and meeting rooms. The work is carried out at the frequency set out in the contract specification. Cleaning of floors and dusting for example is a daily task.

Inspection of the work is the responsibility of the Serjeant at Arms, or Refreshment Department, who bring any shortcomings to the attention of the Parliamentary Works Office's office keeper.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he proposes to take to ensure a thorough cleaning programme is implemented and supervised in the Palace of Westminster; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chope: Subject to agreement of the details with the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee, the Parliamentary Works Office will shortly commission a review of the cleaning arrangements. It will look at options for setting up a coherent management structure, to replace the existing fragmented arrangements, and at the means of ensuring a consistently high standard of cleaning throughout the Palace.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the arrangements which he has now made to ensure that the Members' Tea Room is properly cleaned.

Mr. Chope: The discussions that I mentioned in response to the hon. Member's earlier question on 10 May, *Official Report*, column *190*, have:

(a) clarified the existing responsibilities of the Refreshment Department's and Parliamentary Works Officer's cleaning contractors,

(b) confirmed that the arrangements cover all the cleaning requirements, and

(c) established new arrangements for reporting any shortcomings in the work.

These arrangements, particularly the use of the two contractors in one room, will be considered further in the proposed review of cleaning arrangements generally within the Palace of Westminster which I referred to in answer to another question by the hon. Member today.

Tyneside Enterprise Zone

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what payments he expects to make in 1990-91 to *(a)* Newcastle and *(b)* Gateshead metropolitan district in order to offset forgone uniform business rate in the Tyneside enterprise zone; and what payments he made in 1989-90 in respect of business rate forgone.

Mr. Chope: In 1989-90 the payments to Newcastle upon Tyne city council and Gateshead metropolitan borough council in respect of business rates forgone on the Tyneside enterprise zone were £1,845,007 and £12,921,234 respectively. Under the new local government finance system business properties in enterprise zones are exempt from rating. The amount which Newcastle and Gateshead contribute to the national pool reflects this exemption. A figure broadly equivalent to the amount of rates that would have been paid but for this exemption was added to the revenue support grant for England for 1990-91.

Contracts

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to place contracts for materials and services to his Department with companies and orgnisations that have conducted an environmental audit of their operations.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My Department is currently considering the scope for cost-effective measures to improve environmental performance in purchasing and

building management. We are also looking at further ways of encouraging industry to adopt positive environmental policies.

CITES Inspector

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if Her Majesty's Government are prepared to match the offer of £30,000 per annum made by the World Wide Fund for Nature towards the costs of the investigation and enforcement officer employed by the CITES secretariat; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if Her Majesty's Government intend to make a contribution towards the operating costs of the investigation and enforcement officer employed by the CITES secretariat; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Government are fully committed to CITES and are considering the World Wide Fund for Nature's request for a contribution towards the costs of the investigation and enforcement officer employed by the CITES secretariat.

London Residuary Body

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many properties have been transferred to London boroughs or sold to sitting tenants by the London residuary body at less than market value.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), on 30 March, *Official Report*, column *564*.

Ivory

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 1 May, *Official Report*, column *504*, where information is held on tradeable ivory currently in the United Kingdom; and what steps he is taking to monitor it.

Mr. Trippier: Details of ivory which may be allowed in trade under current CITES controls will be known only to traders and individuals who possess such ivory. Such information as the Department has is limited to individual records of import, export and sale applications. Records of imports and exports of ivory are maintained by the Department in accordance with article VIII.6 of CITES for the purpose of monitoring international trade.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply of 23 May, if he will give details of exemptions granted under article 6.1 of EC regulation 3626/82 since October 1988.

Mr. Trippier: I will write to the hon. Member.

Fenn's Moss

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will give details of the proposals put to his Department regarding the preservation of Fenn's moss; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if his Department will provide funds for the Royal Society for Nature Conservation to purchase the Fenn's and Whitehall mosses as a national nature reserve; what representations he has received on this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No proposals have yet been put to my Department. I am advised by the Nature Conservancy Council that it is considering a number of options to secure the future of the site, including a possible lease or purchase. Neither the Department nor the NCC has however been approached by the Royal Society for Nature Conservation for funds to enable it to purchase the site. Almost 200 representations have been received concerning this site.

Home Improvement Scheme

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to what time scale the Government are working in introducing the new means-tested home improvement scheme.

Mr. Chope: The new house renovation grants system will be introduced, under part VIII of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, on 1 July 1990. A commencement order, bringing into force the relevant sections of part VIII, will be made shortly.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice is being issued to local authorities about the new means-tested home improvement grants.

Mr. Chope: Two departmental circulars will be issued to all local authorities in the next two weeks. These will contain detailed advice on all aspects of the new house renovation grants system, being introduced under part VIII of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations were received in response to the consultation process on the revised procedures for means-testing home improvement grants to people with disabilities; and if he will list those for and those against.

Mr. Chope: Ten organisations responded to the consultation exercise on the proposed test of resources for the new disabled facilities grants, being introduced under part VIII of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. Consultees were invited to submit comments on the content of the test of resources regulations and not the principle of resource-testing such grants which had already been approved by Parliament.

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much money his Department has awarded in housing renovation grants in each of the last 10 years at (i) current prices and (ii) historic prices.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 5 June 1990]:* The amounts of Exchequer contribution given by the Department to local authorities towards their expenditure on home improvement grants for the financial years 1981-82 to 1988-89 are shown in the table. Information is not available for years prior to 1981-82.

	Current prices (£000s)	*Historic prices (£000s)*
1981-82	225,927	137,522
1982-83	284,345	185,564
1983-84	415,401	283,760
1984-85	517,255	370,871

	Current prices (£000s)	Historic prices (£000s)
1985-86	562,222	424,702
1986-87	588,585	459,744
1987-88	605,780	498,557
1988-89	609,533	537,364

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much money his Department awarded in grants for housing renovation purposes in 1989-90.

Mr. Chope *[holding answer 5 June 1990]:* Figures for 1989-90 are not yet available, but the amount of Exchequer contribution given by the Department to local authorities towards their expenditure on home improvement grants for 1988-89 was £537·4 million.

Correspondence

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth will be sent a reply to his letter of 26 March concerning Mr. P. G. Tolan of Kenilworth.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I have replied to my hon. Friend today.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will reply to the letter of 20 April from the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth concerning development in the A5 corridor.

Mr. Moynihan: I wrote to my hon. Friend today.

Pollution

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what date he intends to issue a consultation paper on the Control of Pollution (Amendment) Act 1989; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave on 10 May, *Official Report*, column *187*.

Water Charges

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has now determined the charges limits for all the statutory water companies.

Mr. Trippier: Yes. I have placed in the Library a summary of the limits—the "K" factors—for all the statutory water companies up to 1999-2000. Our proposals will allow charges to rise by 6·5 per cent. a year on average in real terms over the next five years and by less than 2 per cent. a year on average in the following five years.

Shetland Seabirds

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress is being made by the marine top predator group under his Department's chairmanship co-ordinating a multi-disciplinary study of seabird and sand-eel breeding interactions, with particular reference to the breeding failure of Shetland seabirds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier *[holding answer 6 June 1990]:* The marine top predator group has been making good progress. Its first remit was the co-ordination of two major research projects on seabird and sand-eel breeding interactions in the Shetland-Orkney region: a Natural Environment Research Council study to look at seabird dynamics, and a collaborative project funded jointly by Government, NGOs and industry on sand-eels.

A successful pilot project to assess the best geographical sites for study was funded by this Department last year and the NERC study commenced in the autumn for a three- year period. An announcement will be made on the parallel sand-eel project shortly.

Methane Emissions

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the answer of 8 May, *Official Report*, columns *105-8*, why the constant emission factors for methane from coal are higher for *(a)* domestic sector and *(b)* power stations than for other sectors.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 6 June 1990]:* Emission factors used in preparing the national emission inventory are derived from the latest data available. Where possible, they relate to specific source categories. Methane emissions from fuel combustion in each source category are affected by the combustion conditions and the fuel mixture.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts

Mr. Amos: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list the airline used, and the destination of each of the overseas visits undertaken, by the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts for the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: In the 12-month period from 1 May 1989 to 30 April 1990 the Committee undertook two visits overseas. In May 1989 for a visit to Paris the Committee flew by British Airways, except for three Members who, for the return journey, flew by Air France to London, Birmingham and Manchester respectively. In March 1990 the Committee visited Heidelberg, Grenoble and Geneva, flying from London to Frankfurt and from Geneva to London by British Airways, except that on the outward journey two Members flew by Lufthansa and on the return journey one Member flew by British Airways from Geneva to Manchester.

HEALTH

Family Planning (Government Expenditure)

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the level of Government expenditure for each year since 1979 on family planning services.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The available information relates to expenditure on health authority community health services, including overheads, the contraceptive fees paid to general practitioners and the estimated net ingredient cost of contraceptive drugs and appliances prescribed by GPs and dispensed by retail pharmacy and appliance contractors.

In each year since 1979 for which full figures are available, these components give an estimated total cost as follows:

Expenditure on family planning

Year	£ million
1979	37·7
1980	46·8
1981	51·4
1982	58·5
1983	65·4
1984	71·0
1985	76·7
1986	81·6
1987-88	90·5

Cancer

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish the records of newly diagnosed cases of cancer as submitted by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys on magnetic tapes, for the Yorkshire region for the last three years for which records are available.

Mr. Dorrell: The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys collects data on newly diagnosed cases of cancer from the regional cancer registries on an on-going basis, and publishes such data when it is judged that all regions' data for a year are reasonably complete. Receipts from Yorkshire region since 1984 are shown in the table. Nationally the years 1984 and 1985 are deemed to be complete, and are analysed and published. Subsequent years are not considered complete.

Number of receipts of records of newly-diagnosed cases of cancer[1] for Yorkshire region, 1984-90[2]

Year	Number of receipts of records
1984	17,058
1985	17,759
[2]1986	16,798
[2]1987	16,305
[2]1988	6,730
[2]1989	11
[2]1990	—

[1] International Classification of Diseases (ICD) code 140-239.
[2] Provisional as records are still being received.

Tobacco Advertising

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he will publish the third annual report of the Committee for Monitoring Agreements on Tobacco Advertising and Sponsorship.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Committee for Monitoring Agreements on Tobacco Advertising and Sponsorship has submitted its third report and copies have been placed in the Library. I am very grateful to the committee, and particularly to the chairman, Sir Peter Lazarus, for its valuable work in continuing to monitor the agreements, and for its third report to the United Kingdom Health Ministers and to the Minister for Sport. It shows that, in general, the system of voluntary agreements is working well and that the tobacco companies have continued to honour their commitments.

The chairman has expressed the hope that the Government and the tobacco industry will soon reach agreement on the replacement of old signs without health warnings. My colleagues and I note his comments which in our view are fully justified. We are currently discussing how to update the advertising agreement with the tobacco industry and will press for early progress on this issue.

RU486

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many representations he has received in connection with the introduction of RU486 into Britain; and if he will list the total number of *(a)* organisations and *(b)* individuals (i) in favour of and (ii) against its introduction.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: In the past 12 months we have received 86 representations about the drug RU486. Five were in favour of its introduction, 42 against and 39 sought information. Eighty-five were from individuals and one was from an organisation opposed to introduction of the drug.

Mr Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what directives he has given to directors of social services arising from the recommendations of the report of the inquiry into child abuse in Cleveland in 1987.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[pursuant to her reply, 2 May 1990, c. 548]:* The social services inspectorate's inspection of Cleveland is now complete and the report is being published today. The inspection was conducted by the social services inspectorate with advice and assistance from representatives of Her Majesty's inspectorates of constabulary and schools. In addition, the Northern regional health authority made available as advisers a consultant paediatrician and a community unit general manager, both from outside the Cleveland area. The findings of the report are positive and the progress made by Cleveland since the last inspection is encouraging. The inspection has been a valuable exercise and the lessons learnt will be helpful for all agencies that undertake collaborative working for the protection of children from abuse. Copies will be placed in the Library.

SCOTLAND

NHS Expenditure

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give for each five-year period from the year 1960 to the present, the amount spent on the Health Service, expressing it as *(a)* a percentage of the United Kingdom gross domestic product and *(b)* for each five years the percentage increase over the previous five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Complete information covering the period requested is not available.

Milk Marketing

Mr. Stewart: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he has taken with regard to the two smaller milk marketing boards in Scotland following the completion of the study on Scottish Pride quality dairy foods.

Mr. Rifkind: My Department has now completed a study on the relationship between the Aberdeen and district milk marketing board's producer activities and its

commercial division. Copies of the report are now available in the Library of the House. The study on the North of Scotland milk marketing board will be completed shortly.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has issued any circular guidelines to Scottish local authorities regarding the use of their discretion in waiving small amounts of community charge payments due from persons who are deceased; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 5 June 1990]:* Although my right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to issue formal guidance on this question, he hopes that individual authorities, when deciding what their policy is to be towards the collection of community charge amounts that are outstanding at the time of a person's death, will discharge their duties sensitively. In making such decisions, authorities will probably wish to take the advice of their legal advisers and auditors.

Sand-eels

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information his Department has on the recruitment level of sand-eels in Shetland waters in 1986, 1987, 1988, and 1989.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 6 June 1990]:* The latest assessment of sand-eel recruitment in Shetland waters—the number of young fish which become available to the fishery each year—is as follows:

	Million
1986	48,955
1987	2,258
1988	1,273

Insufficient data on the 1989 year class are available so far to give a reliable estimate. The figures refer to "0" group fish—that is, young of the year at 1 July.

Insulation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of dwellings in each district in Scotland are insulated to the standard required by his Department.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 6 June 1990]:* The Scottish Office does not lay down insulation standards for existing houses, but gives guidance to housing authorities on standards where application is made for insulation grant. Information of the type requested by the hon. Member is not held centrally.

TVEI

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received with regard to the future of the technical and vocational education initiative within Highland region; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 24 May 1990]:* I have been asked to reply.

Highland region's director of education has written to ask that Highland may start to extend TVEI to all 14 to 18-year-olds in maintained schools and colleges in August 1990. It will do so.

TRANSPORT

Lorry Tax (West Germany)

Mr. Amos: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the decision by the West German Government to impose a lorry tax on foreign vehicles.

Mr. Atkins: The German Government have announced that from 1 July they will introduce a new lorry tax for all vehicles using German roads. The EC Commission considers this tax to be in contravention of articles 5, 76 and 95 of the EC treaty of Rome. On 10 April the Commission served the German Government with an article 169 letter, the first step in a process leading to the European Court of Justice. On 17 May my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport wrote to the EC Transport Commissioner Van Miert congratulating the Commission on this positive step. He also wrote to the West German Transport Minister expressing concern at effects on United Kingdom hauliers and pointing out the danger to Community plans to complete the internal market if other states take retaliatory action. On 4 June, Commissioner Van Miert advised that the Commission had sent a "reasoned opinion" to the Germans, requiring a response by 22 June. The United Kingdom strongly supports this action.

Cross-channel Ferries

Mr. Fearn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the fire drill regulations for cross-channel passenger ferries.

Mr. Parkinson: The international convention on the safety of life at sea 1974 requires that a drill takes place every week on a cross-channel passenger ferry, and that each member of the crew participates in at least one such drill every month. The Merchant Shipping (Muster and Training) Regulations 1986 apply this requirement to United Kingdom-registered ferries.

British Rail

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of British Rail to discuss the relationship between rail and car transport.

Mr. Freeman: Before the current objectives for British Rail were published last December.

Jumbo Jets

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what regulations govern the amount of fuel which should be held in reserve by jumbo aircraft approaching Heathrow.

Mr. Parkinson: The international standards for fuel and oil supply are contained in annex 6, part 1, to the convention on international civil aviation, at section 4.3.6. The fuel required varies according to several factors, but in general terms, for flights into Heathrow the aircraft must be able to make an approach, then divert to an alternative aerodrome and hold for 30 minutes at the alternate aerodrome, plus a further reserve determined by the state of registry of the operator.

The international standards are amplified in states' regulations which apply to aircraft registered in those states. In the United Kingdom the Civil Aviation Authority has the statutory responsibility for the regulation of civil aviation and the regulations concerning fuel are contained in the Air Navigation Order at article 26.

Mr. McCrindle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has had any discussions with the Civil Aviation Authority regarding the desirability of an in-flight engineer on board Boeing 747-400 aircraft; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Parkinson: No. The composition of flight crew is entirely a matter for the Civil Aviation Authority, which has the statutory responsibility for the safety regulation of civil aviation. I understand that as a consequence of the duty time limitations imposed by the CAA, one or more pilots in addition to the basic two are employed on long-range flights.

Fire Risks (Tottenham Court Road Underground Station)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will call for a report from the chairman of London Underground as to which of the 126 fire risks at Tottenham Court Road station, as detailed in its fire hazards analysis, have been rectified; if he will list all those which have not been tackled to reduce the fire risk to a level acceptable to the London fire brigade; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: In 1988, London Underground commissioned John Brown Engineering to carry out a study of potential fire hazards at Tottenham Court Road station. The consultant made a detailed survey to identify risks arising from combustible materials and how each material might be ignited. The consultant considered that 73 of the potential risks could be dealt with satisfactorily by the provision nearby of fire extinguishing appliances. I understand that action has been taken on the remaining 53 items.

When the LFB inspected the station on 3 November 1989, it found one item which required attention. I have been assured that London Underground has taken action on this.

Departmental Savings

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what were the value-for-money savings in his Department's operations identified by internal audit and internal efficiency arrangements and by external audit and by management consultants retained by his Department between 1983-84 and 1988-89; and what is the amount of those savings fulfilled to date.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 5 June 1990]:* The results of the many such studies are measured on different bases and are not aggregated centrally. Improved quality of service may be as significant as savings. The results are reflected in the budgets and targets set out in the annual departmental management plans, and the business plans of the Department's agencies, copies of which are placed in the Library.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what mechanisms exist in his Department for identifying and tracking value-for-money savings in its operations.

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 5 June 1990]:* In the Department and its agencies, which comprise some 60 per cent. of manpower, prime responsibility for identifying and delivering value for money rests with a range of managers with delegated financial authority. Their responsibilities are reflected in the targets and plans included in the Department's management plan and in the business plans of the agencies. These plans, which include specific efficiency targets agreed with the Treasury, are all published and placed in the Library. Managers use a number of mechanisms to satisfy themselves about value for money, including market testing, efficiency scrutinies and management reviews, depending on the type of expenditure. These mechanisms are discussed from time to time with Treasury and are subject to scrutiny by the National Audit Office.

DEFENCE

Correspondence

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the hon. Member for Walsall, North will be receiving a reply to his letter of 26 April regarding a constituent's wish for assistance for his late sister's headstone renewal.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces will be writing to the hon. Member shortly.

WALES

Euro Info Centre

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what are the locations of the offices of the Wales Euro Info centre; and whether he has plans to establish additional such offices;

(2) if he will make a statement on the objectives of the Wales Euro Info centre;

(3) if he will make a statement on the funding of the Wales Euro Info centre, giving the financial contribution of *(a)* the European Commission, *(b)* the Welsh Development Agency, *(c)* local authorities and *(d)* other bodies.

Mr. David Hunt: The Wales Euro Info centre is part of an EC-wide service which aims to help small and medium-sized businesses by providing a one-stop shop for information about the European Community. It will enable Welsh businesses to be well informed about such matters as EC directives, grants and tendering opportunities. The centre will also provide a means to inform the European Commission about the needs of Welsh business.

The Wales centre is operated by WEIC Ltd., a consortium consisting of the Welsh Development Agency, Clwyd county council and the university of Wales college of Cardiff. The European Commission will provide 50,000 ecu (£35,000) in the first year and 20,000 ecu in each of the next two years. The Welsh Development Agency will contribute £65,000 in the first year, with the other two partners contributing library and accommodation facilities. The budgets for succeeding years have yet to be

determined, although it is expected that an increasing proportion of income will come from charges for services. The Wales centre has offices in Cardiff and Mold. I understand that there are no present plans to open additional offices, but the position will be kept under review.

Rented Accommodation

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the average rent for new lettings of *(a)* Welsh Development Agency and *(b)* Development Board for Rural Wales properties in 1987-88, 1988-89 and 1989-90 and the average rent for new lettings in 1990-91; and what projections he has made for the financial years to 1992-93.

Mr. David Hunt: This information is provided in the Welsh Office commentary to the 1990 public expenditure White Paper, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his Department's policy on the level of rents for new lettings of Welsh Development Agency and Development Board for Rural Wales properties.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave him on Tuesday 5 June.

Hospitals, Buckley

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will meet members of staff of Dobshill hospital, Buckley;

(2) if he will meet members of staff of Meadowsla hospital, Buckley;

(3) if he will visit Meadowslea hospital, Penyffordd, Clwyd;

(4) if he will visit Dobshill hospital, Buckley, Clwyd;

(5) if he will make a statement on the future of Dobshill hospital, Buckley;

(6) if he will make a statement on the future of Meadowslea hospital, Buckley.

Mr. Grist: The future role of Meadowslea and Dobshill hospitals is entirely a matter for Clwyd health authority at this time, and at present neither I nor my right hon. Friend have plans to visit them.

Water Shortages

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what measures he has taken to avoid water shortages this summer; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list the investment and public works to avoid water shortages in Wales undertaken since 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: Comprehensive information on works undertaken to reduce water loss and improve the water supply-distribution system is not held centrally but among the most important are the River Wye transfer scheme and continuing work on the mini-grid system in south-east Wales.

It is the responsibility of Dwr Cymru Cyf to ensure that water supplies within its area can be maintained. The company, in liaison with the National Rivers Authority which has overall responsibility for water resource management, is keeping the present position under review.

Beef

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received from the farming unions concerning the problems of Welsh beef producers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I have received representations from the farming unions concerning the effects of interest rates and BSE on Welsh beef producers' returns and about the level of suckler cow premium. My agriculture colleagues and I are currently considering the suckler cow premium rate for 1990-91 and will make an announcement as soon as possible.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will take urgent steps to assist the beef farmers of Wales following the recent difficulties in that sector; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Beef producers in Wales will benefit from the intervention arrangements agreed in 1989. At the tender which closed on 30 May 1990, all United Kingdom bids were accepted and some 2,045 tonnes of beef will be purchased into intervention in Great Britain over the two weeks ending on 15 June. At the beef management committee meeting on 1 June it was also agreed that a further tender for automatic intervention should be opened immediately.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he proposes to meet the farming unions of Wales concerning the impact of BSE upon the farming industry and the consumer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I intend to meet the Farmers Union of Wales to discuss the whole range of issues affecting Welsh agriculture. My officials have already met representatives to discuss BSE.

Salmonella, Clwyd

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the Clwyd salmonella outbreak of 1989.

Mr. Grist: The draft report by the Department on the handling of the outbreak was sent to Delyn borough council and Clwyd health authority last month. We have asked for their comments by the middle of this month. The report will then be finalised and published as soon as possible.

Holyhead-Crewe Railway Line

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish his Department's reasons for not supporting proposals to electrify the Holyhead to Crewe railway line.

Mr. Roberts: It would be for British Rail to bring foward the necessary investment proposals. The Government are always willing to approve investments put forward by British Rail provided that they are worth while. No economic case has been made however to justify the cost of electrifying this line.

Health Authorities

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales with which chairpersons of health authorities in Wales he or his predecessor has met since 1 January; and on how many occasions he has met each such person during this time.

Mr. Grist: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has not met chairmen of health authorities in Wales since 1 January; he will, however, meet both DHA and FPC chairmen on 10 July.

Gwynedd Health Authority

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales with whom he is holding consultations concerning the future membership and terms of reference of Gwynedd health authority following the coming into force of the National Health Service and Community Care Bill.

Mr. Grist: No formal consultation has been held, but suggestions for membership of all reconstituted authorities have been received from various sources.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he began inviting nominations for the chairmanship of Gwynedd health authority for the period following 3 July when his present appointment expires; by what date nominations should be received by him; and whether these same procedures will be applied for the nomination of other members for that authority to fill vacancies which will arise with the expiration of current appointees following that date.

Mr. Grist: Consideration is being given to the appointment of chairmen of district health authorities whose appointments terminate on 31 July 1990. Nominations were not invited.

It is proposed that the appointment of non-executive members of the reconstituted authorities will be made under the provisions of the National Health Service and Community Care Bill currently before Parliament. Anyone who wishes to put his name forward can do so or nominate others.

Cystic Fibrosis

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what contribution his Department is making to the funding of the pilot programme of screening for cystic fibrosis which will be carried out at the university of Wales medical school, Cardiff.

Mr. Grist: None. I understand from the university of Wales college of medicine that this pilot project is to be funded by the Cystic Fibrosis Research Trust.

Training Agency

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the number of trainees pursuing *(a)* mainstream and *(b)* non-mainstream schemes under the aegis of the Training Agency of each of (i) Gorseinon, (ii) Neath, (iii) Swansea and (iv) Afan colleges.

Mr. Roberts: The number of contracted employment training places for each of the colleges is shown in the table:

	Mainstream	*Non-mainstream*
Gorseinon	160	5
Neath	155	5
Swansea	262	8
Afan	112	8

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average payment per trainee paid by the Training Agency in *(a)* the financial year 1988-89, *(b)* the financial year 1989-90 and *(c)* the current financial year for (i) Gorseinon college, (ii) Neath college, (iii) Swansea college and (iv) Afan college; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Roberts: Details of unit allocations are confidential to the Training Agency and individual training managers.

Tuberculosis

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report*, the reported cases of tuberculosis for each health authority in Wales, for each year between 1979 and 1990.

Mr. Grist: The number of notifications of tuberculosis made to the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys each year from 1979 to 1989 and for the first 20 weeks of 1990 are shown in the table. Data for 1982 onwards may not be strictly comparable with that for earlier years as the system was revised to enable notification associated with chemoprophylaxis to be excluded.

Notifications of Tuberculosis

Welsh District Health Authorities	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*[1]1988*	*[1]1989*	*To Week Ending [1]18-5-90*
Clwyd	48	42	36	41	33	46	39	28	22	19	16	4
East Dyfed	47	30	27	17	25	26	26	21	12	13	6	
Pembrokeshire			18	19	10	10	18	7	9	7	8	
Gwent	49	56	41	49	42	29	32	34	44	25	37	9
Gwynedd	42	40	39	34	38	19	27	22	21	33	23	8
Mid Glamorgan	90	79	80	60	51	71	51	46	45	37	49	9
Powys	12	14	1	5	5	4	2	6	4	1	3	2
South Glamorgan	80	68	62	52	50	70	49	46	44	37	37	18
West Glamorgan	50	44	36	37	44	34	38	23	24	28	28	17
Wales	412	390	325	323	299	308	274	249	232	201	213	81

[1] Provisional

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the correlation coefficient between the incidence of HIV infection and the incidence of tuberculosis in Wales over the period 1980 to 1990.

Mr. Grist: There is no evidence of a correlation between HIV and the overall incidence of tuberculosis in Wales.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Child Benefit

12. **Mr. Faulds:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next expects to meet representatives of the Child Poverty Action Group to discuss child benefit.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I will be meeting representatives of the CPAG tomorrow.

Charitable Giving

Mr. Stevens: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on his proposals to encourage charitable giving.

Mr. Lilley: The Budget proposals to encourage charitable giving have been widely welcomed by the charity world.

52. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the effect of the Treasury's incentives upon the level of charitable donations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lilley: Since 1979 we have improved and extended the range of tax reliefs for charitable giving. These have helped charitable giving to increase substantially in real terms. For example, the Charities Aid Foundation's estimates show that donations to the top 200 fund-raising charities have doubled in real terms since 1978-79.

Interest Rates

15. **Mr. Speller:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his policy on the use of interest rates to influence the number of small business start-ups.

Mr. Ryder: The best way to encourage small businesses is by creating and sustaining an environment in which they can flourish, and that means defeating inflation. The only way to achieve this is to set interest rates at the appropriate level.

20. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from the Confederation of British Industry on the current level of interest rates.

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. Friend has received a number of such representations.

29. **Mr. Benn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he will next meet the Governor of the Bank of England to discuss interest rate policy.

Mr. Major: I meet the Governor of the Bank of England from time to time to discuss a variety of matters.

31. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what impact he assesses his interest rate policy has had on the level of unemployment.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The effects of the Government's interest rate policy were taken into account in the discussion of the prospects for unemployment published in chapter 3 of the "Financial Statement and Budget Report" at paragraph 3.48. The defeat of inflation is essential for economic prosperity and employment.

34. **Mrs. Margaret Ewing:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on the effect of interest rates on Scottish economic performance.

41. **Mr. Sillars:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on the effects of interest rates on Scottish economic performance.

47. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on the effects of interest rates on Scottish economic performance.

53. **Mr. Andrew Welsh:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on the effects of interest rates on Scottish economic performance.

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. Friend has received a number of such representations.

38. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the current level of interest rates.

Mr. Ryder: Bank base rates are 15 per cent.

43. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the extent to which high interest rates add to the rate of inflation, other than in the effects from home mortgage rate increases.

Mr. Ryder: By curbing demand growth, high interest rates, supported by a firm fiscal policy, will in time reduce inflation.

VAT

18. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to review the rate of value added tax on energy efficiency products.

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. Friend keeps all taxation under review.

Corporation Tax

21. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what benefit he expects to flow to small companies as a result of his corporation tax proposals.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Over 20,000 companies—40 per cent. of all companies paying corporation tax at more than 25 per cent.—will pay less tax. The reduction will amount to about £40 million in a full year.

50. **Mr. Bidwell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much corporation tax has been paid by United Kingdom branches of United States banks for the six years to 31 December 1988; and how much tax has been assessed and stood over for the same period.

Mr. Lilley: I regret that the information could be provided only at a disproportionate cost.

Inflation

21. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the contribution made by wage and salary increases to inflation.

Mr. Major: Excessive wage settlements threaten job prospects rather than sustained higher inflation.

24. **Mr. Allen Adams:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the underlying rate of inflation.

Mr. Ryder: There are a number of ways of estimating the underlying rate of inflation. As measured by the RPI excluding mortgage interest payments and the community charge, it was 6·5 per cent. in April.

44. **Sir Michael McNair-Wilson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what distinction he draws for policy purposes between price rises and inflation.

Mr. Ryder: Policy is set to bring down inflation, defined as the change in the aggregate price level. It would be entirely inappropriate to seek to control movements in the relative prices of individual goods and services, since these are essential for the efficient working of a competitive economy.

46. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met the Governor of the Bank of England to discuss policy on reducing inflation.

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. Friend meets the Governor of the Bank of England from time to time to discuss a variety of matters.

48. **Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what effect upon the annual rate of inflation he expects the introduction of the community charge to have.

Mr. Ryder: The average personal community charge in Great Britain is estimated to be 34 per cent. higher than the analogous rates per head figure in 1989-90 for households covered by the RPI. This increase has added about 1 percentage point to the annual rate of retail price inflation.

Environmental Considerations

22. **Ms. Mowlam:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the decisions on taxation he has taken since becoming Chancellor informed by environmental considerations.

Mr. Lilley: My right hon. Friend takes into account all relevant considerations, including where appropriate the effect on the environment, before making any decision on taxation.

Local Government Expenditure

23. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total cost to central Government of support for local government expenditure throughout the United Kingdom.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Central Government support for local authorities in 1990-91 is planned to be £41·8 billion.

Growth Rates

25. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the growth rate of *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* Germany and *(c)* France during the last decade.

27. **Mr. Quentin Davies:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the growth rate of *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* Germany and *(c)* France during the last decade.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Since 1980, growth has averaged 2·7 per cent. a year in the United Kingdom, compared with 2·1 per cent. in France and 2·0 per cent. in Germany.

42. **Mr. Butterfill:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the expected growth for the United Kingdom economy for 1990.

Mr. Norman Lamont: GDP growth is forecast to be 1 per cent. in 1990, as published in the "Financial Statement and Budget Report."

Economic Performance

26. **Mr. Robertson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met the Governor of the Bank of England to discuss United Kingdom economic performance.

Mr. Major: I meet the Governor of the Bank of England from time to time to discuss a variety of matters.

Taxation

28. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of gross earnings the married couple with one earner on 75 per cent. of average earnings, with two children, paid in tax, treating child benefit as negative income tax, in 1978-79 and in 1989-90.

Mr. Lilley: A married man on 75 per cent. of average male earnings with two children would have paid 8·1 per cent. of his gross earnings in income tax in 1989-90, the same proportion as in 1978-79. Over the same period he has enjoyed an increase in real net income of 30 per cent.

Mr. Speller: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has any plans to impose any form of taxation upon newspapers, magazines and books.

Mr. Ryder: No.

Mortgage Rates

30. **Mr. Morley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he will next meet the Building Societies Association to discuss mortgage rates.

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so at present.

Business Investment

32. **Mr. O'Brien:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what his forecast for the growth of business investment is for 1990.

Mr. Norman Lamont: My latest forecast, published in the "Financial Statement and Budget Report", projects business investment to fall by 1 per cent. in 1990. Some slowdown in the growth of business investment in 1990 must be expected as growth in the economy as a whole slows; but this follows three years when business investment has grown by over 40 per cent.

Building Societies (Bad Debts)

33. **Mr. Caborn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from building societies about increasing the provision for bad debts.

Mr. Ryder: None.

Interest and Exchange Rates

35. **Mr. Yeo:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met the Finance Ministers of the Group of Seven countries to discuss interest and exchange rates.

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. Friend met his counterparts in the other Group of Seven countries in Washington on 6 May.

Executive Pay

36. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received on current levels of executive pay.

Mr. Ryder: My right hon. Friend has recently received some letters from members of the public on the pay of company directors and senior executives. Levels of pay are a matter for the parties concerned as only they can know what is right for their particular circumstances. However, the Government have said repeatedly that we are opposed to excessive pay increases since they threaten jobs.

Village Shops

37. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what advice he is giving to district valuation officers in respect of the valuation for the purposes of assessing the business rateable value of village shops.

Mr. Ryder: Valuation officers are required to determine the rateable value of village shops having regard to the provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1988. An estimate has to be made of the rent at which the property might reasonably be expected to be let from year to year.

European Monetary System

39. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average inflation rate of countries in the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system.

Mr. Ryder: The average inflation rate of members of the exchange rate mechanism of the EMS was 4·3 per cent. in March 1990.

40. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects the Madrid conditions concerning United Kingdom entry into the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system to be met; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: I refer the hon. and learned Member to the answer my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer gave to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) on 26 April at column *475*.

Public Spending

45. **Mr. Ralph Howell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the average annual public spending from *(a)* 1970 to 1979 and *(b)* 1980 to 1989 as a percentage of gross domestic product.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The averages of the annual ratios of general Government expenditure (excluding privatisation proceeds) to GDP for the financial years 1970-71 to 1979-80 and 1980-81 to 1989-90 are 43¾per cent. for both periods. In the earlier period the ratio peaked at 48½ per cent. in 1975-76. The highest level in the later period was 46¾ per cent. in 1982-83; the ratio in 1989-90 was 39 per cent.

54. **Mr. Tim Smith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much total public spending will be in 1991-92.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Planned general Government expenditure, excluding privatisation proceeds, in 1991-92 has been set at £230 billion.

Monetary Growth (Prices)

49. **Mr. Gow:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the relationship between the present rate of monetary growth and the Government's declared purpose of achieving stable prices.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The role of monetary policy in the defeat of inflation, the central objective of the medium-term financial strategy, was fully described in the FSBR. Consistent with this objective, the FSBR set a target range of 1-5 per cent. for MO's 12-month growth in 1990-91, although the FSBR noted that it could take some months for MO growth to fall within the range.

EC Contribution

51. **Mr. Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the net contribution to the EC in 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ryder: The latest estimate of the United Kingdom's net contribution to the Community budget in 1990 is £2,175 million. This appeared in the recently published "Statement on the 1990 Community Budget" (Cm. 1059).

Freezones

Mr. Hanley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the outcome of the Treasury's evaluation of the freezone experiment.

Mr. Ryder: A copy of the evaluation report on the United Kingdom freezone experiment (1984-89) by the Treasury's consultants Roger Tym and Partners is being made available today in the House Libraries. Further copies are available from the Treasury.

The experiment has shown that freezones can be worth while and viable enterprises in the United Kingdom. The Government have therefore decided to offer a further designation for 10 years from August 1991 to the three currently operating freezones at Birmingham, Liverpool and Southampton. In addition, the Government intend to announce later in the year objective criteria against which further similar designations of freezones under existing EC and United Kingdom legislation will be considered by Customs and Excise. Applications from potential freezone operators will be invited at that time and will be judged primarily against the criteria of their commercial viability without public sector assistance and sufficient volume of demand to justify the Customs resources required at the freezone.

Finally, the Government have decided in the light of the evaluation report to introduce certain improvements to

the freezone regime. Subject to EC approval, VAT zero rating will be allowed for supplies of imported freezone goods where, under an agreement with the supplier, the customer is required to clear the goods from the freezone. Furthermore, the Customs and Excise guidance on the freezone regime will be updated and consolidated to take account of technical amendments made since the scheme was introduced to ensure that the scheme operates as clearly and simply as possible within the necessary EC and Customs procedures.

Tax-exempt Special Savings Accounts

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many banks and building societies have expressed an interest in TESSA.

Mr. Lilley: Most of the main high street banks and building societies have welcomed this proposal and indicated that they will offer TESSAs.

Departmental Savings

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what mechanisms exist in the Treasury for identifying and tracking value-for-money savings in its operations.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 5 June 1990]*: The core mechanism is the annual cycle of delegated budgeting and work programming in which progress against objectives is assessed and forward priorities are established. This is supported by information technology and purchasing strategies, by rolling programmes of staff inspection and reviews, internal audit and market testing and by other efficiency studies.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the value-for-money savings in his Department's operations identified by internal audit and internal efficiency arrangements and by external audit and by management consultants retained by his Department between 1983-84 and 1988-89; and what is the amount of those savings fulfilled to date.

Mr. Ryder *[holding answer 5 June 1990]*: Total efficiency savings and gains amounted to some £2.2 millon in 1988-89 and £2.6 million in 1989-90. The principal methods of identification were purchasing savings and staff inspections and reviews. Comparable figures for earlier years are not available because of machinery of Government changes.

EMPLOYMENT

Restart

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans there are for the options courses or other restart menu items to be made compulsory.

Mr. Eggar: As my right hon. and learned Friend announced to the House on 11 May, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security intends to introduce regulations later this year which will enable employment service staff to require the attendance at a restart course of those who have been unemployed for two years or more and who, at subsequent restart interviews, refused to participate in any of my Department's employment and training programmes. In some areas, restart courses are known locally as options courses and they will be covered by these regulations.

There are no plans at present to make attendance at any of the other opportunities offered at the restart interview compulsory. However, the conditions attached to Department of Employment programmes are kept continuously under review.

Special Needs Training

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what specific new measures are expected to be made available for the training of people with special needs arising from disabilities and learning difficulties in each region.

Mr. Eggar: The new training and enterprise councils (TECs) are required to set out how they intend to meet the training needs of local people, including those with disabilities and learning difficulties, in their corporate and business plans.

Subject to approval of these plans, and to certain general contractual requirements, it will be a matter for individual TECs to decide what specific new measures they adopt.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has any plans to appoint a TEC director to have explicit responsibility for the disabled and people with learning difficulties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: It is for each training and enterprise council (TEC) to determine the membership of its board within the broad parameters set out by my Department.

Collectively, the TEC board will be responsible for identifying and meeting the training needs of people in its area including those of people with disabilities.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps are being taken to encourage TECs to fund the higher unit cost training of disabled people.

Mr. Eggar: Training and enterprise councils will be expected to offer a full range of training opportunities for people living in their area including people with disabilities.

TECs will also have access to specialist residential training providers offering places to people with disabilities who need special facilities and support.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many board members are on training and enterprise councils.

Mr. Eggar: There are 175 board members on the 13 operational training and enterprise councils.

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many training and enterprise councils have been formed.

Mr. Eggar: Thirteen training and enterprise councils have signed an operating contract and a further 63 are in their development stage.

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many board members on training and enterprise councils are women.

Mr. Eggar: There are 17 women board members on the 13 operational training and enterprise councils.

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many training and enterprise councils have a woman chair.

Mr. Eggar: To date, one training and enterprise council has appointed a woman to chair the council.

Ms. Richardson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many board members on training and enterprise councils are from industry and what is the make-up from other entries.

Mr. Eggar: There are 122 board members from the private sector on the 13 operational training and enterprise councils (TECs). Other board members include 15 representatives from local authorities, nine representatives from trade union organisations, six representatives from voluntary organisations, six representatives from local education authorities, five representatives from educational institutions, two representatives from local health authorities, two representatives from employers associations and two representatives from economic development bodies. Six chief executives are also board members.

TVEI

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his oral reply to the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) of 22 May, *Official Report*, column 161, concerning the implementation of the technical and vocational education initiative, how much was allocated to the London borough of Newham for the current financial year; and how much is indicated for 1991-92.

Mr. Eggar: Newham has been invited to start the extension of its technical and vocational education initiative this year. The precise amount available to it in 1990-91 will be subject to contract and detailed discussion is under way. The amount available for 1991-92 onwards will be reviewed annually so that it can be contained within available resources.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he intends to continue funding the technical and vocational education initiative in Scotland.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 17 May 1990]:* The Government are committed to TVEI and to extending it to all 14 to 18-year-olds in maintained schools and colleges throughout Great Britain.

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many 14 to 18-year-olds have participated in the technical and vocational education initiative within Highland region since its inception; and what proposals have been submitted to him for participation in further projects.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 24 May 1990]:* Over 700 14 to 18-year-olds have participated so far in the TVEI pilot project in Highland region. A further 200 are due to participate in the next academic year. Highland will start extending TVEI to all 14 to 18-year-olds in its maintained schools and colleges later this year.

Mr. Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the total moneys involved in the setting up and running of the technical and vocational education initiative in Highland region since inception; what are the costs involved in evaluating, preparing and submitting any proposals for future projects; what are the anticipated costs of such future projects; and when he expects to be able to make an announcement with regard to future projects.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 24 May 1990]:* By the end of March 1990, Highland had spent £1·2 million on the technical and vocational education initiative. The pilot initiative is still proceeding with £0·9 million planned to be spent by summer 1992. The education authority will begin the extension phase of TVEI in summer 1990. Highland is participating in the TVEI-funded modern language Scottish project and Scottish flexible learning project.

Age Discrimination

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to assess the impact on employers of his Department's encouragement not to discriminate against employees on the grounds of age.

Mr. Nicholls: My Department is using a number of means to monitor the effect of our policy of encouraging employers not to discriminate against employees on the grounds of age. A survey of vacancies notified to jobcentres was carried out in 1989 which showed a reduction, as against the previous year, in the number of vacancies specifying age limits. The Institute of Manpower Studies has recently conducted research, on behalf of my Department, into the employment and utilisation of older workers and will report shortly. Research was also carried out in support of the National Economic Development Office and Training Agency report, "Defusing the Demographic Time Bomb", which showed an encouraging number of employers are taking steps to widen their recruitment sources, including initiatives to attract mature workers.

Employment Training

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the level in money terms from the Government of funding granted to APEX, north-west region, for employment training from 1 April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: The information requested is confidential to the Training Agency and individual ET training managers.

Departmental Savings

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the value-for-money savings in his Department's operations identified by internal audit and internal efficiency arrangements and by external audit and by management consultants retained by his Department between 1983-84 and 1988-89; and what is the amount of those savings fulfilled to date.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 5 June 1990]:* This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what mechanisms exist in his Department for identifying value-for-money savings in its operations.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 5 June 1990]:* Mechanisms to identify and track value-for-money savings include internal audit; follow-up of NAO reports; reviews by management services; external consultants; policy evaluations; efficiency scrutinies; internal reviews; energy efficiency; and a purchasing co-ordination unit. In addition, since 1989-90, value-for-money savings on running costs have been identified in management plans for each part of my Department.

I also expect the establishment of the employment service as an executive agency and of the training and enterprise council network to produce greater value for money in the delivery of my Department's objectives.

Workshops for the Blind

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many workers are employed by workshops for the blind in England and Wales at the latest date;

(2) what funding is made towards the upkeep of workshops for the blind in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will list the workshops for the blind in England and Wales; and if he will indicate how they are funded.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 6 June 1990]:* The employment service, which is responsible for the sheltered employment programme, became an executive agency on 2 April 1990. Mr. Mike Fogden, the employment service agency's chief executive, will be replying in writing to the hon. Member.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will take steps to provide direct funding support for workshops for the blind.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 6 June 1990]:* There are no plans at this time to change the existing arrangements for the funding of sheltered workshops.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received on the threatened closure of the Birkenhead, Liverpool, workshops for the blind; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 6 June 1990]:* My Department has received representations from the National League of the Blind and Disabled about the decision by the management of the Liverpool Workshops and Birkenhead Society for the Blind to close their workshop from 1 October 1990. I understand that this decision was taken following the withdrawal of support for the workshop by one of the four sponsoring local authorities. Officials of the employment service are working closely with the sponsoring local authorities and with organisations involved in supporting sheltered employment in seeking to find suitable alternative employment for the workpeople affected.

Departmental Policies

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will set out *(a)* the failures and *(b)* the successes of his Department's policies since May 1979.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 4 May 1990]:* Since May 1979 my Department's policies have met with considerable success. This can be illustrated by taking for example the fields of employment, training and industrial relations law.

In the field of employment, policies to remove unnecessary restrictions and barriers from the labour market and to stimulate enterprise have helped create conditions under which employment can flourish. At over 27 million, the work force in employment now stands at its highest level ever and the number of self-employed has risen by 1·4 million since June 1979, after little change in the 1970s.

In the training field, we have established ET, the largest adult training programme ever launched in this country, and YTS, which has provided high quality training to thousands of young people and will be further enhanced as the new youth training programme. We have built imaginative and effective links between the worlds of education and work through the technical and vocational education initiative (TVEI), compacts and the enterprise in higher education initiative. Our programme to give local employers responsibility for the design and delivery of training through a national network of training and enterprise councils (TECs) is some two years ahead of schedule.

A further example of success is our step-by-step reform of industrial relations and trade union law. We have redressed the balance between management and unions, and helped make union leaders properly answerable to their members. It can be no coincidence that these reforms have coincided with a dramatic reduction in the number of working days lost because of industrial action. In the 1970s nearly 13 million working days were lost every year; in the 12 months to February 1990 only 5 million working days were lost, and the number of stoppages in February was the lowest since 1933.

I am satisfied that my Department's policies and programmes have generally proved sucessful. We keep them under review and are always looking for ways to improve their effectiveness.

Lambeth Skill Centre

Mr. McLeish: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the sale of Lambeth skill centre to the Training Business Group; what information he has on *(a)* access for transferred staff to trade unions, *(b)* proposed redundancies and *(c)* renegotiation of staff contracts; and whether the Training Agency will meet the owners of the centre to discuss these issues.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 5 June 1990]:* The sale of the business at Lambeth skill centre to the Training Business was completed on 11 May. The centre is now in the private sector and issues relating to trade union recognition and any renegotiation of staff terms and conditions are matters for the new owners and their staff. However, I understand that a number of staff at the centre have volunteered for redundancy and I have no reason to believe that the Training Business will not meet its contractual obligations.

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the number of energy audits carried out in his Department in the last five years and for each audit a statement of its main conclusions.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 5 June 1990]:* Over the past five years energy surveys have been undertaken on 171

buildings. Because of the large number of surveys and the wide variety of recommendations it is not practical to list the main recommendations for each of the surveys.

Implementation of the recommendations of the surveys has led to reduced consumption and cost savings.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give the number of dedicated energy managers in his Department and the number of person years devoted to energy management in the latest year.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 5 June 1990]:* The Department does not have any full-time dedicated energy managers. Energy management forms part of the duties for those staff engaged in estate management. The total number of person years devoted to energy management in 1989-90 was four.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate the numbers removed from the unemployment register since October 1989 as a result of *(a)* actively seeking work suspensions and disallowances, and *(b)* disqualifications for refusal of employment.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 5 June 1990]:* The employment service became an executive agency on 2 April 1990. Mr. Mike Fogden, the employment service agency's chief executive, will be replying in writing to the hon. Member.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 8 June 1990

NORTHERN IRELAND

Accountancy Firms

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether, further to his reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby on 15 January, *Official Report*, column *17*, he will provide a list of the accountancy firms used by his Department.

Mr. Cope: The information requested was given in my reply to the hon. Member on 20 April (Vol. 170, column *1044*). That answer included one firm, John Compton Associates, which was not employed on accountancy work. The figures given in my reply on 15 January to the hon. Member also included some firms not employed on accountancy work and contained an element of double counting. I am grateful for the opportunity to clarify the position.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Science Teachers

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement about the numbers of science teachers he expects to be employed in schools in 1991.

Mr. Alan Howarth: It is for LEAs and schools to decide what teachers to employ and how to deploy them. It is therefore not possible to estimate with any precision how many teachers will be employed and in which subjects. In 1988—the most recent year for which figures are available—provision for science in secondary schools in England was made by the equivalent of some 27,600 full-time teachers. We expect that in 1991 a similar number of science teachers will be needed.

School Closures

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools were closed in each of the past five years in the Wiltshire education authority area.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The number of schools which were closed in each of the past five years in the Wiltshire education authority area was as follows:

Year	*Number*
1989	5
1988	6
1987	1
1986	None
1985	8

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools were closed in each of the past five years within the area now covered by Greenwich local education authority.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Greenwich local education authority came into being on 1 April 1990. Information on school closures in Greenwich is not readily available before this date as it is not possible to identify accurately those schools in the former Inner London education authority that fall within the Greenwich area. Information on schools closures held by the Department is coded at local education authority level. The codings could be subdivided to areas below this level only with the assistance of LEAs concerned, and would involve disproportionate cost.

The Department is not currently aware of any closures in Greenwich since April 1990.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools were closed in each of the past five years in the Cambridgeshire education authority area.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The number of schools which were closed in each of the past five years in the Cambridgeshire education authority area was as follows:

	Number
1989	8
1988	12
1987	7
1986	10
1985	16

Students

Dr. Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of *(a)* undergraduate and *(b)* postgraduate students in England who have home addresses in Wales.

Mr. Jackson: The requested information is as follows:

Welsh domiciled full-time and part-time higher education students in England, 1988-89

	Postgraduates	*Undergraduates*	*Total*
Universities	1,177	6,971	8,148
Polytechnics and Colleges	492	9,247	9,739

Source: Universities Statistical Record.
Further Education Statistical Record.

Youth Service

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was local government expenditure on the voluntary sector of the youth service in 1990 and equivalent figures for 1979-80 and each year from 1984-85 to 1989-90.

Mr. Alan Howarth: There have been several changes over the period 1979-80 to 1988-89 in the coverage of the categories in local education authority spending returns which relate to expenditure by local education authorities on the voluntary youth service. So it is not possible to give the figures requested on a comparable basis. As a rough guide, however, the trend in spending in the relevant categories is estimated as:

	£ million cash
1979-80	9·0
1984-85	17·2
1985-86	18·7
1986-87	18·0
1987-88	17·5
1988-89	20·6

Figures for subsequent years are not yet available.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list by education authority *(a)* expenditure on the voluntary sector of the youth service and *(b)* the related grant-related expenditure allocation for 1988-89 and 1990-91.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Not all local education authorities have yet submitted spending returns for 1988-89. Of those that have, 23 have recorded expenditure on services provided by voluntary associations relating to the youth service, as follows:

	£'000s
Bexley	15
Bromley	51
Croydon	227
Merton	53
Birmingham	921
Coventry	109
Knowsley	1
Wirral	90
Bolton	34
Rochdale	102
Doncaster	38
Bradford	750
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	7
South Tyneside	79
Avon	1,129
Buckinghamshire	152
Devon	492
Humberside	217
Lancashire	368
North Yorkshire	101
Oxfordshire	90
Suffolk	83
Warwickshire	6
ENGLAND TOTAL	5,115

No figures are yet available for spending in 1990-91. There has been no sum specifically identified for spending on the voluntary sector of the youth service within the grant-related expenditure or standard spending assessments of individual LEAs.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was central Government expenditure on the voluntary sector of the youth service in *(a)* 1990, *(b)* 1979-80 and *(c)* each year from 1984-85 to 1989-90.

Mr. Alan Howarth: The information is not readily available in the form requested. The table sets out total expenditure by the Department on the youth service as a whole. While the majority of this expenditure is specifically on voluntary work in the field, the figures include payments for general support made direct to national youth bodies.

Expenditure on the youth service

£ thousand

Financial years	Current	Capital[1]
1979-80	1,623	4,003
1984-85	3,158	263
1985-86	3,493	511
1986-87	3,592	536
1987-88	3,727	511
1988-89	3,940	463
1989-90	4,190	368
1990-91[2]	4,577	651

[1] From 1981-82, the responsibility for grant-aid for local voluntary building projects for the youth service and for village halls and community centres devolved to local government.
[2] Estimates provision.

A-Levels

Mr. Walden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans the Government have for the future of A-levels.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government are committed to maintaining the standards of A-level and Advanced Supplementary examinations and improving their effectiveness in meeting the needs of students and the requirements of higher education and employment.

My right hon. Friend asked the School Examinations and Assessment Council last August to draw up general principles to govern Advanced level syllabuses and examinations, with a view to having an improved system in place by 1994. These principles will provide controls on standards, syllabus development and progression from GCSE. Draft principles will be considered by the council in July, before wider consultation.

My right hon. Friend has also more recently asked the council to advise him in July on the scope for embodying in the programmes of all Advanced level students a range of core skills needed for adult working life; and on the possibilities for credit transfer between Advanced level and vocational qualifications.

My right hon. Friend will consider carefully the implications of what the council proposes.

Voluntary-aided Schools

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set out the criteria which his Department applies in considering requests for the establishment of new voluntary-aided schools.

Mr. MacGregor: Under section 13 of the Education Act 1980 a voluntary body of any religious persuasion which wishes to establish a new voluntary aided school, whether or not the school already exists as an independent school, is free to seek the approval of the Secretary of State, after consulting the relevant local education authority. When making the decision whether to approve an application for voluntary-aided status, the Secretary of State considers each case on its merits, taking account of a number of factors, including:

(i) the overall need for school places in the area, as well as denominational need;
(ii) whether the proposal has the support of the LEA, which would be responsible for the cost of maintaining the VA school;
(iii) whether the premises are up to standard;

(iv) whether the teachers are suitably qualified and the school is able and willing to deliver the national curriculum and to provide equal opportunities for boys and girls;
(v) whether the promoters are able to meet the expenses which would fall to them.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Know-how Fund

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the use of the know-how fund to date.

Mrs. Chalker: Expenditure for 1989-90 under the know-how fund for Poland was £2·3 million. The know-how fund for eastern Europe now covers operations in Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and the German Democratic Republic. Commitments are growing rapidly, and we expect to spend fully the £15 million available for expenditure in the current financial year.

Mr. Jim Lester: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to provide assistance in support of Operation Lifeline II in Sudan.

Mrs. Chalker: I have allocated £3 million, of which I have pledged £1 million to the International Committee of the Red Cross for its relief operations in southern Sudan. The balance will be apportioned between British non-governmental organisations and international agencies once their specific appeals have been received and evaluated.

NATIONAL FINANCE

War Loan

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost to the Treasury of holders of 3½ per cent. war loan having their stocks redeemed at par value.

Mr. Ryder: The cost of redeeming 3½ per cent. war loan at par would be £1,909 million.

Tax Returns

Miss Lestor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people from whom a completed tax return was not obtained because, after inquiries, they could not be traced there were in 1988-89 and 1989-90.

Mr. Lilley: No count is maintained. Address details are nearly always held for the people from whom returns are wanted.

Gross National Product

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will tabulate for each fiscal year since 1963-64 the proportion of gross national product represented by *(a)* public expenditure, *(b)* taxation and *(c)* the public sector borrowing requirement.

Mr. Lilley: The information requested is in the table.

As a percentage of money GDP

	General government expenditure (GGE)	*Taxes and national insurance contributions*	*PSBR*
1963-64	36·2	29·1	3·3
1964-65	35·8	29·5	2·7
1965-66	37·2	31·2	2·6
1966-67	38·7	32·0	2·9
1967-68	42·4	33·3	4·9
1968-69	40·9	35·2	0·8
1969-70	40·3	36·9	−1·3
1970-71	40·6	36·3	1·5
1971-72	41·1	34·7	1·6
1972-73	40·6	32·4	3·6
1973-74	42·7	33·2	5·8
1974-75	48·0	35·6	9·0
1975-76	48·4	36·1	9·2
1976-77	45·9	35·7	6·4
1977-78	42·3	34·6	3·6
1978-79	43·2	33·8	5·3
1979-80	43·2	35·0	4·8
1980-81	45·8	36·2	5·3
1981-82	46·3	39·3	3·3
1982-83	46·5	38·8	3·1
1983-84	45·4	38·4	3·1
1984-85	45·5	39·1	3·0
1985-86	43·7	38·5	1·6
1986-87	42·3	37·9	0·9
1987-88	40·0	37·9	−0·8
1988-89	37·3	37·2	−3·0
[1]1989-90	38·1	36·7	−1·5

[1] PSBR is outturn, GGE, and taxes and NICs are 1990 budget estimates. Ratios are adjusted for the distortion to money GDP arising from the abolition of domestic rates.

TRANSPORT

London Bus Routes

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many bus routes have been put out to tender by London Regional Transport; and what savings have been achieved.

Mr. Freeman: To date approximately 180 routes have been put out to tender, which is about 25 per cent. of the London Regional Transport bus network. LRT estimates that tendering of routes has resulted in real net savings of some 15 per cent. on total operating costs.

Vehicle Emissions

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what further provisions he is making to reduce emissions from motor vehicles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: Amendments to the Construction and Use Regulations were laid before the House on 5 June.

The new amendments follow up European requirements on gaseous emissions that are already being applied in the Type Approval Regulations. They also apply the strict stage II emission limits for small cars set by Community directive 89/458 from 31 December 1992. This means that virtually all new petrol-engined cars from 1993 onwards will need to be fitted with catalysts.

Limits on particulate emissions from diesel cars are also introduced.

The regulations require the user of a vehicle to keep the engine in tune and any emission control equipment, such as a catalyst, in good working order. It is important for drivers to recognise this responsibility and it is in their own

interest to do so. Keeping the engine in tune helps to reduce fuel consumption as well as keeping emissions down.

The new regulations also introduce the first gaseous emission limits for lorries and buses. Community directive 88/77 covers diesel-engined vehicles over 3·5 tonnes gross weight. These limits for heavy duty diesels are just a first step. The Commission has just announced proposals for a substantial tightening of these limits and the introduction of a particulate standard. However, they do not go quite as far as I would like. The Government believe that for the mid-1990s the European Community should adopt limits for other gaseous and particulate emissions as close as possible for the United States 1994 standards, which are the strictest worldwide.

Business Aviation

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has received representations from companies operating in the United Kingdom concerning their possible need to relocate to continental bases because of current restrictions at London Heathrow on business aviation.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend has received representations concerning the restrictions on business aviation at Heathrow, asserting that adequate access to the airport is important to maintain the United Kingdom's international competitiveness. It has also been stated that inadequate access could lead business aircraft owners and operators to relocate to other countries, but specific cases have not been put to us.

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what evidence has been obtained by his Department from business aircraft operators concerning their operations at London's airports following publication of document CAP 559.

Mr. McLoughlin: My Department has frequent and continuing contacts with business aviation interests through which it obtains information and views on the effects of Government policy in this area.

Mr. Warren: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will review the competitiveness of London's airport provision for business aviation; if he will make a comparable assessment of the strategy of the Paris airports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Business aviation interests keep before us their views on the sector's needs in the London area. It is our policy that the peripheral London airports should accommodate business aviation displaced from Heathrow and Gatwick. If the industry felt that a dedicated facility on the lines of Paris Le Bourget was desirable, we should expect it to develop proposals.

Air Service Agreements

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the current round of talks with the United States of America on bilateral air service agreements.

Mr. McLoughlin: Negotiations are continuing.

DEFENCE

Plutonium Contamination

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans or studies have been made by his Department to assess what measures would have to be taken in the event of contamination by airborne plutonium resulting from a nuclear weapons accident aboard a Royal Navy ship docked at Greenwich; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans or studies have been made by his Department to assess measures that would have to be taken in the event of contamination by airborne plutonium resulting from a nuclear weapons accident aboard a Royal Navy ship docked at Greenwich.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It has been the policy of successive British Governments neither to confirm nor to deny the presence of nuclear weapons on Her Majesty's ships. There are, however, detailed contingency plans for dealing with the extremely remote possibility of an accident involving the release of radioactive material from a weapon while in the custody of the Royal Navy, and these include plans to deal with such an accident on board a warship.

Mr. Jonathan Moyle

Mr. Galloway: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the capacities in which the late Jonathan Moyle served Her Majesty's Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Royal Air Force records show that the late Jonathan Moyle served as an officer in the Royal Air Force from 1980 to 1988.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Benefits (Blyth Valley)

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total sum of unclaimed social security benefits in Blyth Valley and Northumberland in the latest convenient 12-month period.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Such estimates can be made only at national level.

Local Offices

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any plans to increase the local office allocations previously announced to the House; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: We have no plans to do so, but are continuing to monitor local office budgets closely.

I regret that there were errors in the list of 1990-91 social fund budget allocations in the *Official Report* on 26 March at column *35* for Portsmouth, South and Havant local offices. Boundary changes in Birmingham, following the closure of Birmingham Bradford street office, and in London South region have also resulted in revised allocations to four offices. The amended allocations for the offices concerned are set out in the table.

	Loans £	Grants £
Havant	198,973	78,996
Portsmouth South	222,318	84,125
Birmingham Ladywood	623,631	260,652
Birmingham Ravenhurst	492,642	214,821
Oval	370,937	179,390
Balham	480,070	205,798

Posts (Newcastle)

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many of the jobs announced in April for the Newcastle Central office at Long Benton are *(a)* existing posts relocated to Newcastle and *(b)* completely new additions to his Department's overall manpower.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Of the 1,000 jobs to be located at the Newcastle site for the contributions agency, 800 are existing posts from the Department's regional organisation dealing with contributions record keeping. The centralisation of this function will enable a better service to be provided. The offsetting staff savings will fall in very small numbers over approximately 450 local offices throughout the country. About 200 new posts will be created to form the headquarters of the agency, but because of efficiency savings overall there will be no commensurate increase in the Department's total manpower.

National Insurance

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the average amount of national insurance paid by *(a)* married men and *(b)* single men, in the age groups (i) 16 to 20 years, (ii) 20 to 25 years, (iii) 25 to 30 years, (iv) 30 to 35 years, (v) 35 to 40 years, (vi) 40 to 45 years, (vii) 45 to 50 years, (viii) 50 to 55 years, (ix) 55 to 60 years and (x) 60 to 65 years, in the last five years.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The information is not available in the exact form requested. The latest available information which relates to 1987 is in the table.

Average amounts of National Insurance paid, 1987[1] (£ per week)

Age group	All single men	Single men paying contributions (all classes)	All married men	Married men paying contributions (all classes)
16-19	3·37	6·73	7·92	7·92
20-24	8·21	11·35	9·13	12·42
25-29	10·85	13·39	11·83	14·09
30-34	10·53	13·83	13·70	15·78
35-39	9·99	13·94	14·20	16·07
40-44	9·78	14·05	14·26	16·29
45-49	9·31	14·44	13·45	15·50
50-54	8·74	12·93	11·59	14·63
5-59	8·29	12·43	10·26	13·84
60-64	4·78	13·26	5·96	12·40

[1] Source Family Expenditure Survey, 1987.

Fraud

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his latest estimate of the amount defrauded from the social security system as a total cash amount and as a number of pence on the basic rate of income tax.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: No reliable estimate is available of the cost of fraudulent social security claims.

Disabled Young People

206. **Mr. Jerry Hayes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he has any plans to improve the benefit entitlement of disabled young people.

Mr. Scott: Yes. We propose that where single young people of 16 to 17 who qualify for the disability premium are claiming income support independently from their parents, they should in future be entitled to the higher rate of personal allowance normally appropriate for those of 18 to 24. Thus their income support rate, including the premium, will rise from £37·30 to £44·20.

We estimate that this will help some 4,000 disabled young people at an annual cost of £1,500,000. Regulations to provide for this change are being laid today, with a view to bringing it into effect from 2 July 1990.

Separated Parents

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has any plans to assist separated parents by the provision of financial assistance towards long-distance travelling costs of accommodation.

Mr. Scott: A separated parent may obtain help with these costs from the social fund. If receiving income support, he or she may be awarded a community care grant, whether for visiting a child living with the other parent pending a custody decision, or where the child or other parent is ill, or where the payment would ease a domestic crisis. Alternatively, crisis loans are available to anyone where payment is the only means of avoiding serious risk or damage to the health or safety of the applicant or a member of his family. We have no plans to alter these arrangements.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has of the total cost to public funds on an absolute and per-employee basis of support for manufacturing industry and on both national and regional levels in the five most recently available years in *(a)* France, *(b)* West Germany, *(c)* Italy, *(d)* Denmark and *(e)* the United Kingdom.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The information is as follows:

Aid to manufacturing (excluding shipbuilding and steel) in national currency at constant 1986 prices (millions)

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*
France	40,655	40,793	41,481	38,794	36,173
West Germany	15,254	14,449	14,949	15,836	15,601
Italy[1] [2]	26,360	33,994	30,760	29,263	34,851
Denmark	2,182	1,975	1,495	1,762	1,107
United Kingdom	2,867	1,940	2,185	1,975	1,906

Aid in manufacturing (excluding shipbuilding and steel) as ECU per employee in manufacturing—average 1981-86

	Millions
France	1,223
West Germany	940
Italy[1]	5,951
Denmark	609
United Kingdom	757

Source: European Commission.
[1] Italian figures are to be revised downwards.
[2] In billion Lira.

Steel Imports

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the amount of special engineering steels imported into the United Kingdom, from which countries, by tonnage and by estimated price, for each of the years 1980 to 1989.

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 7 June 1990]:* Data are not available on the basis indicated.

HEALTH

Mentally Ill and Mentally Handicapped People

Mr. Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will give a breakdown by age of the patients resident in each of the hospitals for the mentally ill and the mentally handicapped which he listed as becoming empty over the next five years in his answer to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) of 5 April, *Official Report*, column *737*.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not collected centrally.

Community Care

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of the £50 million bridging fund to improve community care for people with mental illness or mental handicap has so far been claimed on behalf of mental handicap services and mental illness services, respectively.

Mr. Dorrell: The capital loan fund provides for £10 million to be allocated in England this year with a further £15 million and £25 million respectively in the following two years; thus establishing a £50 million rolling programme. A substantial number of applications for funds has been made and are now being assessed with priority being given to mental health projects which develop care in the community facilities, without distinction between mental handicap and mental illness. The intention is to announce successful applications which will cover the first year's allocation by the end of the month.

Newspaper Deliveries

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has any plans to prohibit the employment of young people aged under 16 years in the delivery of newspapers.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: We have no such plans. Only children over the age of 13 may be employed in the delivery of newspapers as provided in the Children and Young Persons Act 1933 and local authority byelaws made under that Act.

Sugared Medicines

7. **Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he has any plans to prohibit or reduce the use of sugared medicines for children;

(2) what steps the Government are taking to overcome the dangers of tooth decay inherent in the use of sugared medicines for children.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The danger of tooth decay in children from the use of sugared medicines is small in comparison with that arising from their consumption of confectionery. Although sugared liquid medicines which have to be taken by children for long periods are undesirable, sugar may be useful in a formulation, to improve palatability or as a natural preservative. Nevertheless, a move towards sugar-free medicines has been accelerated by the recent report on dietary sugars and human disease by the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy. New sugar-free medicinal products are emerging and, in addition, a briefing paper prepared for health professionals by the Health Education Authority, based on the report, recommends that when medicines are needed, particularly in the long term, parents and medical practitioners should select sugar-free formulations.

Non-milk Extrinsic Sugars

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to reduce the consumption of non-milk extrinsic sugars.

Mr. Dorrell: The steps are twofold. First, we sought and have published COMA's authoritative advice on the relationship between dietary sugars and human disease. Secondly, we are acting on the report's recommendations. One of the main recommendations was that the population as a whole reduce its consumption of non-milk extrinsic sugars. The recommendations for action in support of this aim were mainly directed at health education. I am pleased to say, therefore, that the need to reduce the consumption of non-milk extrinsic sugars is now an integral part of the Health Education Authority's major new programme of nutrition and dental health education. The HEA has already produced a well-received briefing paper for health professionals based on the COMA report. In addition new guidelines on all aspects of diet, including sugars consumption, are being prepared jointly by this Department, the HEA and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. These will be published shortly.

Other Government action includes encouragement for more sugar-free medicinal products and for manufacturers to adopt current MAFF guidelines that suggest inclusion of sugar content as part of nutrition declarations on food labels.

Child Protection Teams

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of child protection teams allocated to each health board within the United Kingdom; and what is the number of people in each team.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: It is for local agencies in England to decide in the light of local needs and circumstances on the allocation of staff to child protection work. Information on the number of staff working specifically in this field is not collected centrally.

Arrangements for the rest of the United Kingdom are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of cases reported to child protection teams in the United Kingdom in the last 12 months; and what was the number of cases actively pursued.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Information is not collected centrally about the number of cases reported to child protection teams or the number of cases actively pursued. For England, information is collected centrally about the number of names added to child protection registers. The most recent information relates to the year ending 31 March 1989 and is published in the provisional feedback "Children and Young Persons on Child Protection Registers England 1989". Copies are available in the Library.

Statistics for the rest of the United Kingdom are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Child Psychologists

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many child psychologists were employed in National Health Service clinics in *(a)* 1989, *(b)* 1984 and *(c)* 1970.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The information requested is not available. However, the hon. Member may like to know that there were 291 (whole-time equivalent) clinical psychologists working with children and adolescents in England in 1989. This is the first year for which such data have been collected.

Child Abuse

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he intends to meet representatives of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, the Association of Directors of Social Services, the Children's Society and Childline to discuss the co-ordination of information relating to ritual child abuse and child abuse networks.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Officials from the Department of Health and the Home Office held a meeting on 3 May 1990 with representatives of the NSPCC, the Children's Society, Childline, the National Children's Home, local authorities and the police. It was agreed that the Department of Health would continue to meet individuals and groups during the summer further to explore the issues involved.

Cerebral Palsy

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current cost of treatment being offered to children suffering from cerebral palsy.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: This information is not available centrally.

Minor Surgery

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether the new guidelines on the minor surgery list will preclude general practitioners from conducting minor surgery in which they are totally competent on the basis that they are not competent in all the areas of minor surgery which are listed on the revised claim forms; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what effect upon waiting lists for minor surgery he expects the revised provisions for payment and competence to have.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: No changes have been made to the criteria for admission to the list of doctos providing minor surgical services or to the remuneration arrangements for these services. To be admitted to the minor surgery list a doctor must display competence in all the approved procedures. This is to encourage GPs to extend their skills and provide additional services to their patients. By this means patients will be saved the inconvenience of attending an out-patients department and waiting lists should be relieved.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health for how many minor surgical procedures claims may be made in an appropriate period by general practitioners; and who will be responsible for such minor surgery once these limits have been reached.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: General practitioners on the minor surgery list receive payment on a sessional basis. A session consists of at least five procedures. A GP is allowed to claim three sessional payments a quarter. Where a GP is a member of a partnership or group practice he or she may claim a higher number of payments in a quarter up to a maximum of three times the number of partners or members of the group. There is of course nothing to stop a GP doing more procedures if he or she wishes, but they will not generate any further income.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Passports

Mr. Walden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the reasons are for renewing passports after 10 years.

Mr. John Patten: The validity of the United Kingdom passport is normally limited to 10 years in line with international passport practice. As a document of nationality and identity, a passport must reflect the changes that can occur over time in a person's appearance and national status. There is also the problem of wear and tear.

Police Remand Prisoners

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners are being held in custody at police stations *(a)* in the Metropolitan area and *(b)* outside the London area, as of 1 June; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The number of prisoners held in police cells in the Metropolitan police area and elsewhere in England and Wales from 1 June were as follows:

Date	*Metropolitan police area*	*Elsewhere in England and Wales*
1 June	245	809
2 June	245	809
3 June	245	809
4 June	216	864
5 June	218	893
6 June	177	900
7 June	143	951

We very much regret the current situation which has resulted in part from industrial action by prison officers in the London area—now over—and from difficulties we are facing in getting prisoners into prison establishments following the recent prison disturbances. My right hon. and learned Friend is determined to return to the situation where it is no longer necessary to resort to the use of police cells, and I am sure the great majority of responsible prison officers will wish to do likewise.

Crime Figures

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next plans to meet the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis to discuss crime figures.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. and learned Friend meets the Commissioner on a regular basis to discuss a wide range of policing matters, including crime in London.

Concessionary Television Licences

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received over the past 12 months about concessionary television licences.

Mr. Mellor: In the year ended 31 May 1990 we received four petitions and 1,463 letters about free or reduced price licences for pensioners. One thousand two hundred and two of the letters were cyclostyled and clearly sent as part of a local campaign. Of the rest, 123 were from hon. Members.

Police Cells

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women were being held in police cells in England and Wales on 21 May.

Mr. Mellor: On 21 May there were 1,047 male and no female prisoners held in police cells in England and Wales.

Crime Figures

Mr. Meale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next plans to meet the chief constable of Nottinghamshire to discuss crime figures.

Mr. John P. Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next plans to meet the chief constable of South Wales to discuss crime figures.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. and learned Friend meets chief officers of police on a regular basis to discuss a wide range of policing matters, but he has no present plans for meetings to discuss crime figures in particular.

Burglaries

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the number of burglaries reported in each of the last three years.

Mr. John Patten: The information requested is published in table 1 of the Home Office statistical bulletin 10/90, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Court Users Committees

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many court users committees are now operating in England and Wales.

Mr. John Patten: Up-to-date information is not at present available, but it should become available by the end of the year as part of the returns for the magistrates courts management information system.

Women's Issues

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to appoint a women Minister as chairman of the ministerial group on women's issues.

Mr. John Patten: Ministers attend the ministerial group on women's issues on the basis of their departmental responsibilities for matters within the remit of the group. The group is chaired by myself, as the Home Office Minister of State with special responsibility for equal opportunities. The vice-chairman is my hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold) who is also co-chairman of the Women's National Commission.

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what policy initiatives have been undertaken as a result of discussions by the ministerial group on women's issues.

Mr. John Patten: The ministerial group was established in 1986 to provide a co-ordinated examination of policy issues of special concern to women, and with a particular duty to consider the Government's response to the forward looking strategies for the advancement of women (adopted during the UN Decade for Women). The main initiatives taken as a result of the group's discussions have been:

(i) A review of the Government's policy in areas covered by the Forward Looking Strategies (published in April 1987);
(ii) the issue of guidance designed to ensure that civil servants recognise the equal opportunities implications of policy proposals;
(iii) the agreement of initiatives aimed at increasing the number of women appointed to public bodies;
(iv) the agreement in April 1989 of a five-point plan designed to improve the range and quality of childcare options, followed by a second five-point plan on childcare agreed in February 1990; and

(v) a package of initiatives drawn up in July 1989 to tackle domestic violence.

Copies of the group's report on the forward looking strategies were placed in the Library in 1987. Further details of the initiatives on equal opportunity "proofing", child care and domestic violence are given in the press releases that were issued after the group's meetings in October 1988, April 1989, July 1989, October 1989 and February 1990 (copies of which have been placed in the Library).

WALES

Health Authorities

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to appoint as chairpersons and new members of health authorities in Wales persons resident within the district which their authority serves.

Mr. Grist: Persons appointed will usually live, work or have connections with the area served but it would be unnecessarily prescriptive to adopt the policy requested.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to introduce any change in the salary of the chairpersons of health authorities, or in the terms of reference of the appointment of members of the authorities, following their reconstitution during 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: We expect to introduce changes in chairmen's current remuneration levels which will reflect their greater responsibilities accruing from our planned programme of NHS reforms. The terms of reference of members will remain substantially as at present.

Training Credits

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many training and enterprise councils in Wales have made a bid for the introduction of training credits for young people.

Mr. Roberts: Two TECs in Wales submitted outline bids. The North-East Wales TEC has been invited to develop its bid further.

Youth Training

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what the budget for the Training Agency in Wales was in 1988-89, and 1989-90 for youth training schemes; and what his estimate is of the budget 1990-91.

Mr. Roberts: The budgets for 1988-89 and 1989-90 were £55·278 million and £50·884 million respectively. For 1990-91 the budget is £45·750 million. This is a reflection of the decline in youth unemployment and demographic change.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment his Department has made of the contribution made by the Training Agency and the managing agents of youth training schemes in 1988-89 and 1989-90 to the finances of each technical college in Mid Glamorgan.

Mr. Roberts: The contribution has been significant but no formal assessment of it has been made.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 16 May, *Official Report*, columns *479-80*, if he will list the occasions since the introduction of service planning paper 5 when a health authority in Wales has failed to follow the consultation provisions of that document; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: I will write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my reply in the Library of the House.

Community Hospital Beds

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 21 May, *Official Report*, column *62*, (1) on what date he asked district health authorities to submit new local strategies for health; what guidance he gave on local public consultation; and if he is taking any steps to monitor the progress in developing these strategies;

(2) what is his Department's guidance to health authorities in Wales on publishing strategic options which are currently being developed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Grist: In November 1989 the Department launched a wide-ranging consultation exercise on the Welsh Health Planning Forum's proposals for developing a better basis for long-term strategic planning in the NHS in Wales. The planning forum recommended that district health authorities and family practitioner committees should submit their long-term response strategies to the Welsh Office by December 1991.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will shortly announce his response to the consultation exercise. Health authorities will then be given advice on a range of related issues, including timetabling and arrangements for monitoring the progress of the planning exercise.

Advice on district health authorities' short-term "pathfinder" procurement and unit business plans was contained in Welsh Office circular WHC(90)19, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House. No advice has been given on the framework for publishing these plans, as this is a matter for individual health authorities.

Gwynedd Health Authority

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 21 May, *Official Report*, column *58*, whether any consultative bodies in Gwynedd will be allowed to comment on the proposed list of chairman and five members of the Gwynedd health authority, as reconstituted under the provisions of the National Health Service and Community Care Bill; and by what date he hopes to publish these names.

Mr. Grist: No shortlist of names will be published for consultation.

District Health Authorities

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what directives he has issued to district health authorities in Wales during the past 12 months on the need to reduce administrative and clerical spending; and what assessment he has made of the performance of each health authority in Wales in this regard.

Mr. Grist: No such directives have been issued in the last 12 months. Management costs of health authorities

are the subject of monitoring and assessment by the Welsh Office as part of the process of annual review of performance. Authorities are reminded of the need to subject such costs to the most rigorous scrutiny and to keep them to the minimum.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will state how much expenditure has been increased by his Department in each of the past five years on consultants, investigations and reports relating to district health authorities in Wales; and if he will list those district health authorities which are currently being helped by financial consultants in respect of their strategic options and business plans for the period from 1 April 1991, and for which his Department is meeting either part, or the whole, of the consultancy costs, noting in each instance the Department-borne part of the costs.

Mr. Grist: The expenditure incurred directly by the Department in each of the past five years on consultants, investigations and reports relating to district health authorities in Wales was as follows:

	£
1985-86	Nil
1986-87	
C. Squares Ltd.—Data envelopment analysis	1,150
Taylor Nelson Group—Welsh inter-censal study	17,250
1987-88	
Deloitte, Haskins and Sells—Gwynedd DHA—Financial review and development of action plan	173,650
University of Birmingham—Inter authority comparisons	5,000
1988-89	
Deloitte, Haskins and Sells—Oncology study	40,250
Cancer treatment study	40,030
Touche Ross—Report on paymaster function	13,141
Deloitte, Haskins and Sells—Gwynedd DHA—Assistance in implementing action plan	6,326
1989-90	
Deloitte, Haskins and Sells—Cancer service study	67,930
Cancer treatment services	7,370
Price Waterhouse—Project 2000	79,922

The Department's contributions towards the cost of preparing pathfinder district procurement and unit business plans for 1990-91 are as follows:

	£
Clwyd	20,000
East Dyfed	9,000
Gwent	27,500
Gwynedd	26,500
Mid Glamorgan	12,000
Pembrokeshire	20,000
Powys	44,000
South Glamorgan	35,000
West Glamorgan	2,034

The pathfinder plans will inform district health authorities for 1991-92.

With the exception of the funding provided to Gwynedd health authority, which represented 50 per cent. of the costs of a management consultancy to assist with the determination of strategic options and the production of a pathfinder business plan, it is not possible to say how much of the money made available to individual district health authorities will be used to engage the services of management consultants. This is a matter for individual district health authorities to decide in the light of their own local management arrangements.

Beef

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the state of the beef industry in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The December 1989 sample census figures showed that the Welsh beef breeding herd had increased by 6 per cent. compared with December 1988. Specialist beef producers have also benefited from last year's 42 per cent. increase in the rate of suckler cow premium which was worth some £8 million to producers in Wales in the 1989-90 scheme year; and hill livestock compensatory allowance payments on cattle in 1989 amounted to more than £8 million.

Following the devaluation of the green pound agreed at the 1990 price fixing, support prices have increased by 8·5 per cent. with the rate of beef special premium increasing from £29·19 to £31·80 a head from May 1990.

Although market prices are currently depressed, the beef intervention system can now be managed very flexibly to provide support where it is most needed.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will estimate the effect on beef production in Wales of France's continuing ban on British beef; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: It is not possible to separate the effects of the illegal French ban from other factors which affect the beef market.

Local Management of Schools

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he expects there to be any cuts in the staffing of schools of less than 200 pupils in Wales as a result of the implementation of local management of schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Roberts: There is no evidence that the introduction of local management of schools will lead to a reduction in the number of teaching jobs. Local management of schools of itself in no way affects the overall amount of money available within authorities for school education. It simply represents a more open way of distributing the same resources to secure better educational value for money.

SCOTLAND

Press Releases

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many press releases have been issued by himself, his Minister of State and each of his Parliamentary Under-Secretaries, from May 1989 to the present date.

Mr. Rifkind: The total number of news releases issued by the Scottish Information Office in the period 1 May 1989 to 31 May 1990 covering the activities of myself and my ministerial colleagues was 1,286. The number issued on behalf of each Minister was as follows:

	Number
Secretary of State for Scotland	307
Minister of State (Commons)	336
Minister of State (Lords)	118
Minister for Home Affairs and the Environment	284
Minister for Health and Sport	241

Life Sentences

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many prisoners serving life sentences have been granted parole or released on licence during the past 20 years in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A total of 335 prisoners sentenced to life imprisonment or detained during Her Majesty's pleasure or without limit of time were released on licence in the 20 years to 31 December 1989. Separate figures are not maintained for life sentence prisoners alone, nor are such prisoners eligible for the grant of parole.

Land Registration

Mrs. Margaret Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list *(a)* the areas in respect of which the provisions of the Land Registration (Scotland) Act 1979 relating to registration have come into operation and *(b)* those areas in respect of which said provisions have not yet come into operation showing when it is estimated that provisions will come into operation.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: As regards *(a)*, I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave her on 19 December 1989 at columns *145-46*. By definition, the remaining areas of Scotland are not yet operational. No new areas are currently planned to become operational before 31 March 1993. My right hon. and learned Friend has asked the Keeper of the Registers of Scotland to present to him, this financial year, a phased programme for extending the Land Register to the remaining two thirds of Scotland.

Farm Pollution

Mr. Wray: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he is taking to stop the increase in farm pollution cases in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am pleased to say that the number of farm pollution incidents has fallen from 713 in 1987 and 572 in 1988 to 462 in 1989. The Government are presently considering the outcome of public consultation earlier this year on proposals for regulations to control silage, slurry and agricultural fuel oil installations on farms with the aim in due course of laying new regulations before Parliament.

Polmont Young Offenders Institution

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the cost of the new perimeter fence and other recent increased security arrangements at Polmont young offenders institution.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The figure is £1,265,000 (including VAT).

Bed-and-Breakfast Accommodation

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will obtain for his departmental library a copy of the speech on Friday 18 May by Superintendent Donald McLean, president of the Association of Scottish Police Superintendents, on the subject ot homeless young people in bed-and-breakfast accommodation funded by the Department of Social Security.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 7 June 1990]:* The Scottish Home and Health Department already has a copy of the speech on which I commented at the association's annual meeting.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

El Salvador

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in investigating the murders in El Salvador in 1989 of six Jesuit priests, their cook and her daughter.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel) on 5 June at column *465*.

Nuclear Non-Proliferation

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the number of countries other than the existing six nuclear weapons states which either possess, are about to possess or plan to possess nuclear weapons; if he will name the countries concerned; and which of them are signatories to the non-proliferation treaty.

Mr. Waldegrave: There are five nuclear weapons states (NWS), of which three are signatories of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT). There are six states not parties to the NPT (Argentina, Brazil, India, Israel, Pakistan and South Africa) which have significant unsafeguarded nuclear activities, though none has declared itself to have or to be seeking nuclear weapons. North Korea, which is not recognised as a state by Her Majesty's Government, has acceded to the NPT, but has so far failed to conclude a safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), although it also has significant nuclear facilities.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government will be making to the non-proliferation treaty review conference.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 9 May to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang) at column *181*.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his latest information on the status of military nuclear developments in Brazil.

Mr. Waldegrave: Although not a party to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT), Brazil has signed and ratified the treaty of Tlatelolco which bans nuclear weapons in South America.

The Brazilian constitution introduced in October 1988 provides that Brazil's nuclear activities are to be for peaceful purposes only. However, there are some unsafeguarded nuclear activities in Brazil which appear to be concentrating on the use of nuclear propulsion for submarines.

Council of Europe Officials

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the number of senior officials employed by the Council of Europe from the United Kingdom and other member states; and what steps are taken to ensure a balance between the numbers.

Mr. Waldegrave: On 1 May 1990, 23 of the 138 senior officials (grades A4 to A7) of the Council of Europe came from the United Kingdom; others were: Federal Republic of Germany 23, France 21, Italy 20, Netherlands nine, Belgium eight, Austria five, Switzerland five, Sweden five, Spain four, Turkey four, Greece three, Republic of Ireland two, Luxembourg two, Cyprus one, Denmark one, Malta one, Norway one. British nationals occupied two of the 25 top A6 and A7 posts (France seven, Italy four, Federal Republic of Germany three, Switzerland two, and one each from Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Ireland, Netherlands and Spain). We are broadly satisfied with the current overall balance, which reflects the requirement that posts should be fairly distributed among member states. If an imbalance were to arise we would discuss it with the Secretary-General, who has statutory responsibility for the question.

Cambodia

Mr. Bowis: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current Khmer Rouge offensive in western Cambodia, Kompong Speu province and Phnom Penh; and what steps he is taking individually or with the international community to prevent the reimposition of tyranny on the Cambodian people.

Mr. Sainsbury: We note with concern reports of increased military activity by the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, but cannot confirm their accuracy. As permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, we continue to work for a comprehensive political settlement enabling the Cambodian people to elect a Government of their choice, free from the fear of Khmer Rouge atrocities, foreign occupation or civil war.

South Africa

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response he has made to the decision of the Government of the Republic of South Africa to end apartheid in the health services.

Mr. Waldegrave: Our goal remains the complete eradication of apartheid in all forms. We welcome the opening of hospitals to all races as further evidence of the South African Government's commitment to this objective.

Mediterranean Basin

Mr. Harry Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what commitment has been made by the Government of Gibraltar in support of the Nicosia charter to protect the environment of the Mediterranean basin.

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 21 May 1990]:* The principal aim of the Nicosia charter was to reiterate the commitment of the parties to the convention for the protection of the Mediterranean sea against pollution (the Barcelona convention). The United Kingdom and Gibraltar are not parties to this convention, although Gibraltar does comply with relevant provisions of it. We naturally welcome measures which will lead to an improvement in the Mediterranean environment.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Potato Marketing Scheme

Mr. Andy Stewart: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the latest state of play on the amendments to the potato marketing scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The Potato Marketing Board has submitted proposed amendments to Ministers, the main purpose of which is to involve non-producer interests in the board's market management decisions, as requested by Ministers in July 1989. The amendments will also reduce the size of the board. The Secretaries of State and I have made certain modifications to the board's proposals, as a result of which they will be implemented more quickly. An order will be laid before the House shortly.

Agriculture Council

Mr. John Greenway: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of Agriculture Council held on 6 June; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement that I made in the House last night.

EMPLOYMENT

Value Added Tax

Mr. O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will list the category of businesses which were registered for value added tax in 1988 in the counties of North, South and West Yorkshire;

(2) what are *(a)* the category of businesses and *(b)* the numbers in each category which came off the value added tax register in 1988 in the counties of North, South and West Yorkshire.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested is given in "VAT registrations and deregistrations: analysis by county: 1980-1988" which is available in the Library.

Employment Training

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the number of participants on employment training over the last year and the number that have not had a place on a training scheme or found employment on leaving employment training in Avon.

Mr. Nicholls: At 30 March 1990, the latest date for which information is available, there were 3,134 people on employment training in Avon. Information about the destinations of people leaving employment training is not yet available for Avon.

Energy Conservation

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 1 May, *Official Report*, column *471*, whether the study to examine labour market and skills implications of increased environmental awareness includes an examination of opportunities in the field of energy conservation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The Employment Department Training Agency-funded study of increased environmental awareness will focus on the labour market and skill implications of air and water pollution control and solid waste management. It will not deal directly with energy conservation.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the locations of the training and enterprise councils which have been approved.

Mr. Eggar: The following 13 training and enterprise councils have signed operational contracts:

Hertfordshire
Thames Valley
Devon/Cornwall
Dorset
Calderdale and Kirklees
Cumbria
ELTEC (East Lancashire)
Oldham
Rochdale
South and East Cheshire
Teeside
Tyneside
Wearside

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many training and enterprise councils have been approved; and how many are waiting approval.

Mr. Eggar: Thirteen training and enterprise councils (TECs) have signed operational contracts, and 63 TECs are in their development stage and preparing their corporate and business plans. I expect a further six to enter the development phase shortly.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment in how many of the approved training and enterprise councils the post of chief executive has been filled by a person who was in post as a regional manager of a training commission; and in how many cases such people have negotiated an entitlement which would allow them to return to the training commission.

Mr. Eggar: Of the 13 training and enterprise councils so far operational, 10 have chief executive posts filled by people who previously held civil service posts within the Training Agency. One of those has resigned from the civil service and become a TEC employee, the remaining nine being on secondment. All secondees remain in the civil service and have the right to return to the Employment Department group at the end of the secondment period.

Leptospirosis

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the incidence of leptospira hardjo and Weil's disease among those in occupations of greatest risk over the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholls: There were 299 confirmed cases of leptospirosis in England and Wales in the period 1985-89, of which 180 are known to have been occupationally related. Leptosprosis hardjo, which is associated with cattle, accounted for 139 of these cases among agricultural and abattoir workers, those involved in pig, cattle and dairy farming, and veterinary workers. Weil's disease can develop from any leptospiral infection but is most common in infections associated with rats, although few cases actually occur. Those at risk include sewer and water workers. In the five-year period there were 15 deaths from leptospirosis infection reported in England and Wales.

Energy Consumption

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will give for each year from 1978 the energy consumption, broken down by fuel, of the buildings occupied by his Department, expressing the figures in *(a)* cash terms, *(b)* 1978-79 money terms and *(c)* units of consumption for electricity in kilowatt hours, gas in therms, liquid fuel in litres and solid fuel in tonnes.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 5 June 1990]:* I regret that this information is not available. Before April 1990 the PSA was responsible for energy monitoring and did not retain this information in the form requested.

ENVIRONMENT

Disabled Facilities Grant

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what would be the maximum disabled facilities grant payable in respect of eligible works amounting to *(a)* £5,000, *(b)* £10,000, *(c)* £15,000, *(d)* £20,000 and *(e)* £25,000 to (i) a single disabled person with a disability premium, (ii) a single disabled person with a severe disability premium, (iii) a married couple, one of whom is in receipt of a disability premium, (iv) a married couple, one of whom is in receipt of a disability premium, and with two children and (v) a married couple with two children, one of whom is in receipt of a disability premium, where, in each case, there were (1) no savings and where there were savings of (2) £3,000, (3) £5,000, (4) £8,000 and (5) £10,000.

Mr. Chope: Regulations laid down before the House today (the Housing Renovation etc. Grants (Reduction of Grant) Regulations 1990—SI 1990 No. 1189) provide that the amount of disabled facilities grant will depend on the cost of the eligible works, the composition of the

applicant's household and the applicant's income, including notional tariff income in respect of any savings in excess of £5,000. There will be no overriding maximum grant.

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, in respect of disabled facilities grants where income exceeds the lower income threshold and the universal £20 grant premium, and every 20p in the pound is regarded as being available to help finance the works through a notional loan secured on the property, what are the currently proposed loan generation factors for owner-occupiers and for tenants for every excess £1 per week.

Mr. Chope: Regulations laid before the House today (the Housing Renovation etc. Grants (Reduction of Grant) Regulations 1990—SI 1990 No. 1189) provide for a loan generation factor of 51·54 to be applied to owner-occupiers' applications for disabled facilities grants, and a factor of 34·62 to be applied to tenants' applications. These factors incorporate the 20p in the pound contribution rate.

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the proposed lower income thresholds for disabled facilities grants for *(a)* a single disabled person with a disability premium, *(b)* a single disabled person with a severe disability premium, *(c)* a married couple, one of whom is in receipt of a disability premium and *(d)* a married couple, one of whom is in receipt of a disability premium, and with two children and *(e)* a married couple with two children, one of whom is in receipt of a disability premium.

Mr. Chope: In accordance with regulations laid before the House today (the Housing Renovation etc. Grants (Reduction of Grant) Regulations 1990—SI 1990 No. 1189), the lower income thresholds (or applicable amount) for disabled facilities grants in each of the cases cited will be as follows:

(a) single disabled person: £72·10 pw (£3,760 pa)
(b) single severely disabled person: £100·30 pw (£5,230 pa)
(c) Maried couple, one disabled: £99·70 pw (£5,199 pa)
(d) Married couple, one disabled, with two children: £143·55 pw (£7,485 pa)
(e) Married couple with two children, one disabled: £136·85 pw (£7,136 pa)

In each case the adults are assumed to be between 25 and 59 years old and any children are 11 to 15. These thresholds do not include the appropriate earnings disregards (£15 per week in cases *(a)* to *(d)*, £10 per week in case *(e)*).

Mr. Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the proposed upper income thresholds for a disabled facilities grant for eligible works amounting to *(a)* £5,000, *(b)* £10,000, *(c)* £15,000, *(d)* £20,000 and *(e)* £25,000 to *(i)* a single disabled person with a disability premium, *(ii)* a single disabled person with a severe disability premium, *(iii)* a married couple, one of whom is in receipt of a disability premium, *(iv)* a married couple, one or whom is in receipt of a disability premium, and with two children and *(v)* a married couple with two children, one of whom is in receipt of a disability premium.

Mr. Chope: In accordance with regulations laid before the House today (the Housing Renovation etc. Grants (Reduction of Grant) Regulations 1990—SI 1990 No. 1189), the upper net income thresholds for disabled facilities grants in each of the cases cited would be as follows:

Case	*Upper net income threshold for disabled facilities grant entitlement—£pw (£pa) by cost of eligible works*				
	£	£	£	£	£
Works costings	5,000	10,000	15,000	20,000	25,000
(i) Single, disabled	184·11 (9,600)	281·12 (14,658)	378·14 (19,717)	475·15 (24,776)	572·16 (29,834)
(ii) Single, severely disabled	212·31 (11,070)	309·32 (16,129)	406·34 (21,188)	503·35 (26,246)	600·36 (31,304)
(iii) Married couple, one disabled	211·71 (11,039)	308·72 (16,098)	405·74 (21,156)	502·75 (26,215)	599·76 (31,273)
(iv) Married couple, one disabled, two children	255·56 (13,326)	352·57 (18,384)	449·59 (23,443)	546·60 (28,501)	643·61 (33,560)
(v) Married couple, two children, one disabled	243·86 (12,716)	340·87 (17,774)	437·89 (22,833)	534·90 (27,891)	631·91 (32,950)

These figures assume that income includes earnings, and take into account the appropriate earnings disregards (£15 per week in cases (i) to (iv), £10 per week in case (v)). In each case it is assumed that the application is in respect of an owner-occupied property, that the adults are between 25 and 59 years old, any children are aged 11 to 15, and that any capital, after any appropriate disregard, in £5,000 or less.

Housing

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list Government policies for housing help for people with HIV or AIDS.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Department's capital allocation to housing authorities enable them to take into account any special housing needs of people with AIDS. The Housing Corporation will also consider bids from housing authorities on behalf of people with AIDS.

Management Consultants

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what *(a)* guidance and *(b)* encouragement is given by his Department to local authorities to use management consultants to improve the efficiency of local government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: None. It is for authorities themselves to decide whether to use consultants for this or other purposes. The Audit Commission and its auditors issue a great deal of very valuable advice to help authorities improve their efficiency.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what involvement his Department had in the recent study by the PA Consulting Group and *Local Government Chronicle* entitled, "The Management of Change in Local Authorities"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: None.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Speller: To ask the Secretary of Stste for the Environment what are *(a)* the average cost per person of Government provision towards local government services and *(b)* individual community charges in each district of Devon.

Mr. Chope: The amount of external support (revenue support grant, special grant and business rates) per adult and the community charge for each district in Devon are:

District	*External support (£ per adult)*	*Community charge (£ per adult)*
East Devon	426	345
Exeter	462	344
Mid Devon	462	339
North Devon	470	319
Plymouth	481	350
South Hams	431	334
Teignbridge	441	365
Torbay	458	395
Torridge	511	285
West Devon	443	331

In addition the Government contribute towards the cost of local government through specific grants, community charge rebates, and transitional relief.

Beaches

Mr. Churchill: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps his Department takes to monitor beaches round the United Kingdom for the presence of viruses in water; and if he will publish the most recent figures available.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The measurement of viruses in bathing water identified under directive 76/160/EEC is a matter for the competent authority, which in England and Wales is the National Rivers Authority. The available results for the 1989 bathing season are in the report placed in the Library on 25 January (*Official Report*, c. *785*.).

House Prices

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish for each county, metropolitan district and London borough area latest estimates of average house prices for *(a)* all houses, *(b)* flats, *(c)* terraced houses, *(d)* semi-detached and *(e)* detached houses.

Mr. Michael Spicer *[holding answer 5 June 1990]:* I have today placed a table giving the available information based on the building society mortgage survey in the Library.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 173**

SESSION 1989–90

21st May—8th June 1990

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes, and cannot, therefore, be used in conjunction with the daily part or weekly Hansard. For these versions use the Fortnightly Index.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr. Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Mr. Speaker and his deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

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The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Com = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

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